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ARTHUR MERVYN.

A Tale.



IN THREE VOLUMES.



BY

C. B. BROWN,

AUTHOR OF

JANE TALBOT, EDGAR HUNTLY, PHILIP STANLEY, &c.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.



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PREFACE.

THE evils of pestilence by which the city of Philadelphia has lately been afflicted, will probably form an æra in its history. The schemes of reformation and improvement to which they will give birth—or, if no efforts of human wisdom can avail to avert the periodical visitations of this calamity, the change in manners and population which they will produce, will be in the highest degree memorable. They have
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already supplied new and copious materials for reflection to the physician and the political economist. They have not been less fertile of instruction to the moral observer, to whom they have furnished new displays of the influence of human passions and motives.

Amidst the medical and political discussions which are now afloat in the community relative to this topic, the author of these remarks has ventured to methodize his own reflections, and to weave into a humble narrative such incidents as appeared to him most instructive and remarkable among those which came within the sphere of his
own

own observation. It is every one's duty to profit by all opportunities of inculcating on mankind the lessons of justice and humanity. The influences of hope and fear, the trials of fortitude and constancy, which took place in this city in the autumn of 1793, have perhaps never been exceeded in any age. It is but just to snatch some of these from oblivion, and to deliver to posterity a brief, but faithful sketch of the condition of this metropolis during that calamitous period. Men only require to be made acquainted with distress, for their compassion and their charity to be awakened. He that depicts in lively colours the evils of disease and poverty, performs an eminent service

service to the sufferers, by calling forth benevolence in those who are able to afford relief; and he who portrays examples of disinterestedness and intrepidity, confers on virtue the celebrity and homage that are due to it, and rouses in the spectators the spirit of salutary emulation.

C. B. B.

ARTHUR MERVYN.



CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTORY.

I WAS resident in the city of Philadelphia during the year 1793. Many motives contributed to detain me; though departure was easy and commodious, and my friends were generally solicitous for me to go. It is not my purpose to enumerate these motives, or to dwell on my present concerns and transactions, but merely to compose a narrative of some incidents with which my situation made me acquainted.

Returning one evening, somewhat later than usual, to my own house, my attention was attracted just as I entered the porch, by the figure of a man reclining against the wall at a few paces from me. My sight was imperfectly assisted by a distant lamp; but the posture in which he sat, the hour, and the place, immediately suggested the idea of one disabled by sickness. It was obvious to conclude that his disease was pestilential. This did not deter me from approaching, and examining him more closely.

He leaned his head against the wall, his eyes were shut, his hands clasped in each other, and his body seemed to be sustained in an upright position merely by the cellar-door, against which he rested his left shoulder. The lethargy into which he was sunk, seemed scarcely interrupted by my feeling his hand and his forehead. His throbbing temples and burning skin indicated a fever; and his form, already emaciated, seemed to prove that it had not been of short duration.

There

There was only one circumstance that hindered me from forming an immediate determination in what manner this person should be treated. My family consisted of my wife and a young child. Our servant-maid had been seized three days before by the reigning malady, and, at her own request, had been conveyed to the hospital. We ourselves enjoyed good health, and were in hopes of escaping with our lives. Our measures for this end had been cautiously taken, and carefully adhered to. They did not consist in avoiding the receptacles of infection, for my office required me to go daily into the midst of them; nor in filling the house with the exhalations of gunpowder, vinegar, or tar. They consisted in cleanliness, reasonable exercise, and wholesome diet. Custom had likewise blunted the edge of our apprehensions. To take this person into my house, and bestow upon him the requisite attendance, was the scheme that first occurred to me. In this, however, the advice of my wife was to govern me.

I mentioned the incident to her. I pointed out the danger which was to be dreaded from such an inmate. I desired her to decide with caution, and mentioned my resolution to conform myself implicitly to her decision. Should we refuse to harbour him, we must not forget that there was an hospital to which he would perhaps consent to be carried, and where he would be accommodated in the best manner the times would admit.

“Nay,” said she, “talk not of hospitals; at least let him have his choice. I have no fear about me for my part, in a case where the injunctions of duty are so obvious. Let us take the poor unfortunate wretch into our protection and care, and leave the consequences to Heaven.”

I expected, and was pleased with this proposal. I returned to the sick man, and, on rousing him from his stupor, found him still in possession of his reason. By the light of a candle, I now examined him more accurately.

His

His garb was plain, careless, and denoted rusticity : his aspect was simple and ingenuous, and his decayed visage still retained traces of uncommon, but manlike beauty. He had all the appearances of mere youth, unspoiled by luxury and uninured to misfortune. I scarcely ever beheld an object which laid so powerful and sudden a claim to my affection and succour.

“ You are sick,” said I, in as cheerful a tone as I could assume. “ Cold bricks and night airs are comfortless attendants for one in your condition. Rise, I pray you, and come into the house. We will try to supply you with accommodations a little more suitable.”

At this address he fixed his languid eyes upon me. “ What would you have ?” said he. “ I am very well as I am. While I breathe, which will not be long, I shall breathe with more freedom here than elsewhere. Let me alone—I am very well as I am.”

“Nay,” said I, “this situation is unsuitable to a sick man. I only ask you to come into my house, and receive all the kindness that it is in our power to bestow. Pluck up courage, and I will answer for your recovery, provided you submit to our directions, and do as we would have you. Rise, and come along with me. We will find you a physician and a nurse; and all we ask in return is good spirits and compliance.”

“Do you not know,” he replied, “what my disease is? Why should you risk your safety for the sake of one whom your kindness cannot benefit, and who has nothing to give in return?”

There was something in the style of this remark that heightened my prepossession in his favour, and made me pursue my purpose with more zeal.

“Let us try what we can do for you,” I answered. “If we save your life, we shall have done you some service; and as for recompence, we will look to that.”

It

It was with considerable difficulty that he was persuaded to accept our invitation. He was conducted to a chamber, and the criticalness of his case requiring unusual attention, I spent the night at his bedside.

My wife was encumbered with the care both of her infant and her family. The charming babe was in perfect health, but her mother's constitution was frail and delicate. We simplified the household duties as much as possible; but still these duties were considerably burthensome to one not used to the performance, and luxuriously educated. The addition of a sick man was likely to be productive of much fatigue. My engagements would not allow me to be always at home; and the state of my patient, and the remedies necessary to be prescribed, were attended with many noxious and disgusting circumstances. My fortune would not allow me to hire assistance: my wife with a feeble frame, and a mind shrinking on ordinary occasions from such offices with

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fastidious scrupulousness, was to be his only or principal nurse.

My neighbours were fervent in their well-meant zeal, and loud in their remonstrances on the imprudence and rashness of my conduct:—they called me presumptuous and cruel in exposing my wife and child, as well as myself, to such imminent hazard, for the sake of one too who, most probably, was worthless, and whose disease had doubtless been, by negligence or improper treatment, rendered incurable.

I did not turn a deaf ear to these censurers. I was aware of all the inconveniences and perils to which I thus spontaneously exposed myself: no one knew better the value of that woman whom I called mine, or set a higher price upon her life, her health, and her ease. The virulence and activity of this contagion, the dangerous condition of my patient, and the dubiousness of his character, were not forgotten by me; but still my conduct in this affair received my own
entire

entire approbation. All objections on the score of my wife were removed by her own willingness and even solicitude to undertake the province. I had more confidence than others in the vincibility of this disease, and in the success of those measures which we had used for our defence against it: but, whatever were the evils to accrue to us, we were sure of one thing—namely, that the consciousness of having neglected this unfortunate person would be a source of more unhappiness, than could possibly redound from the attendance and care that he would claim.

The more we saw of him, indeed, the more did we congratulate ourselves on our proceeding. His torments were acute and tedious; but in the midst even of delirium his heart seemed to overflow with gratitude, and to be actuated by no wish but to alleviate our toil and our danger. He made prodigious exertions to perform necessary offices for himself: he suppressed his feelings, and struggled to maintain a cheerful tone and countenance, that he might prevent

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that anxiety which the sight of his sufferings produced in us: he was perpetually furnishing reasons why his nurse should leave him alone, and betrayed dissatisfaction whenever she entered his apartment.

In a few days there was reason to conclude him out of danger: and in a fortnight nothing but exercise and nourishment was wanting to complete his restoration. Meanwhile nothing was obtained from him but general information, that his place of abode was Chester County, and that some momentous engagement induced him to hazard his safety by coming to the city in the height of the epidemic.

He was far from being talkative. His silence seemed to be the joint result of modesty and unpleasing remembrances; his features were characterized by pathetic seriousness, and his deportment by a gravity very unusual at his age. According to his own representation, he was no more than eighteen years old; but the depth of his remarks indicated a much greater advance. His
name

name was Arthur Mervyn. He described himself as having passed his life at the plough-tail and the thrashing-floor, as being destitute of all scholastic instruction, and as being long since bereft of the affectionate regards of parents and kinsmen.

When questioned as to the course of life he meant to pursue upon his recovery, he professed himself without any precise object. He was willing to be guided by the advice of others, and by the lights which experience should furnish. The country was open to him, and he supposed that there was no part of it in which food could not be purchased by his labour. He was unqualified by his education for any liberal profession. His poverty was likewise an insuperable impediment. He could afford to spend no time in the acquisition of a trade: he must labour not for future emolument, but for immediate subsistence. The only pursuit which his present circumstances would allow him to adopt, was that which, he was inclined to believe, was likewise the most eligible.

how to value the thoughts of other people, but he could not part with the privilege of observing and thinking for himself. He wanted business which would suffer at least nine-tenths of his attention to go free. If it afforded agreeable employment to that part of his attention which it applied to its own use, so much the better; but if it did not, he should not repine. He should be content with a life whose pleasures were to its pains as nine are to one. He had tried the trade of a copyist, and in circumstances more favourable than it was likely he should ever again have an opportunity of trying it; and he had found that it did not fulfil the requisite conditions: whereas the trade of a ploughman was friendly to health, liberty, and pleasure. ✓

The pestilence, if it may be so called, was now declining. The health of my young friend allowed him to breathe the fresh air, and to walk. A friend of mine, by name Wortley, who had spent two months from the city, and to whom, in the
course

course of a familiar correspondence, I had mentioned the foregoing particulars, returned from his rural excursion. He was posting, on the evening of the day of his arrival, with a friendly expedition to my house, when he overtook Mervyn going in the same direction. He was surprised to find him go before him into my dwelling, and to discover, which he speedily did, that this was the youth whom I had so frequently mentioned to him. I was present at their meeting.

There was a strange mixture in the countenance of Wortley when they were presented to each other. His satisfaction was mingled with surprise, and his surprise with anger. Mervyn, in his turn, betrayed considerable embarrassment. Wortley's thoughts were too earnest on some topic to allow him to converse: he shortly made some excuse for taking leave, and rising, addressed himself to the youth, with a request that he would walk home with him. This invitation, delivered in a tone which left it doubtful whether

whether a compliment or menace were meant, augmented Mervyn's confusion. He complied without speaking, and they went out together. My wife and I were left to comment upon the scene.

It could not fail to excite uneasiness: they were evidently no strangers to each other. The indignation that flashed from the eyes of Wortley, and the trembling consciousness of Mervyn were unwelcome tokens: the former was my dearest friend, and venerable for his discernment and integrity; the latter appeared to have drawn upon himself the anger and disdain of this man. We already anticipated the shock which the discovery of his unworthiness would produce.

In half an hour Mervyn returned. His embarrassment had given place to dejection. He was always serious, but his features were now overcast by the deepest gloom. The anxiety which I felt would not allow me to hesitate long.

“Arthur,” said I, “something is the matter with you. Will you not disclose it to us?”

us? Perhaps you have brought yourself into some dilemma, out of which we may help you to escape. Has any thing of an unpleasant nature passed between you and Wortley?"

The youth did not readily answer. He seemed at a loss for a suitable reply. At length he said, that something disagreeable had indeed passed between him and Wortley. [He had had the misfortune to be connected with a man by whom Wortley conceived himself to be injured. He had borne no part in inflicting this injury, but had nevertheless been threatened with ill-treatment if he did not make disclosures which indeed it was in his power to make, but which he was bound by every sanction to withhold. This disclosure would be of no benefit to Wortley—it would rather operate injuriously than otherwise; yet it was endeavoured to be wrested from him by the heaviest menaces.]

There he paused. We were naturally inquisitive as to the scope of these menaces; but

but Mervyn entreated us to forbear any further discussion of this topic. He foresaw the difficulties to which his silence would subject him. One of its most fearful consequences would be the loss of our good opinion. He knew not what he had to dread from the enmity of Wortley: Mr. Wortley's violence was not without excuse. It was his mishap to be exposed to suspicions, which could only be obviated by breaking his faith: but, indeed, he knew not whether any degree of explicitness would confute the charges that were made against him; whether by trampling on his sacred promise he should not multiply his perils, instead of lessening their number. A difficult part had been assigned to him; by much too difficult for one young, improvident, and inexperienced as he was.

Sincerity perhaps was the best course. Perhaps, after having had an opportunity for deliberation, he should conclude to adopt it; meanwhile he entreated permission to retire to his chamber. He was unable
to

to exclude from his mind ideas which yet could, with no propriety, at least at present, be made the theme of conversation.

These words were accompanied with simplicity and pathos, and with tokens of unaffected distress.

“Arthur,” said I, “you are master of your actions and time in this house. Retire when you please: but you will naturally suppose us anxious to dispel this mystery. Whatever shall tend to obscure or malign your character, will, of course, excite our solicitude. Wortley is not short-sighted, or hasty to condemn. [So great is my confidence in his integrity, that I will not promise my esteem to one who has irrecoverably lost that of Wortley. I am not acquainted with your motives for concealment, or what it is you conceal; but take the word of one who possesses that experience which you complain of wanting, that sincerity is always safest.”]

As soon as he had retired, my curiosity prompted me to pay an immediate visit to
Wortley.

Wortley. I found him at home. He was no less desirous of an interview, and answered my enquiries with as much eagerness as they were made.

“ You know,” said he, “ my disastrous connexion with Thomas Welbeck. You recollect his sudden disappearance last July, by which I was reduced to the brink of ruin : nay, I am even now far from certain that I shall survive that event. I spoke to you about the youth who lived with him, and by what means that youth was discovered to have crossed the river in his company on the night of his departure. This is that very youth.

“ This will account for my emotion at meeting him at your house : I brought him out with me ; his confusion sufficiently indicated his knowledge of all the transactions between Welbeck and me. I questioned him as to the fate of that man. To own the truth, I expected some well-digested lie ; but he merely said that he had promised secrecy on that subject, and must therefore be excused
from

from giving me any information. I asked him if he knew that his master, or accomplice, or whatever was his relation to him, absconded in my debt? He answered that he knew it well; but still pleaded a promise of inviolable secrecy as to his hiding-place. This conduct justly exasperated me, and I treated him with the severity which he deserved. I am half ashamed to confess the excesses of my passion: I even went so far as to strike him. He bore my insults with the utmost patience: no doubt the young villain is well instructed in his lesson; he knows that he may safely defy my power.—From threats I descended to entreaties: I even endeavoured to wind the truth from him by artifice. I promised him a part of the debt if he would enable me to recover the whole; I offered him a considerable reward if he would merely afford me a clue by which I might trace him to his retreat: but all was insufficient. He merely put on an air of perplexity, and shook his head in token of non-compliance.”

Such

Such was my friend's account of this interview. His suspicions were unquestionably plausible, but I was disposed to put a more favourable construction on Mervyn's behaviour. I recollected the desolate and penniless condition in which I found him, and the uniform complacency and rectitude of his deportment for the period during which we had witnessed it. These ideas had considerable influence on my judgment, and indisposed me to follow the advice of my friend, which was to turn him forth from my doors that very night.

My wife's prepossessions were still more powerful advocates of this youth: she would vouch, she said, before any tribunal for his innocence; but she willingly concurred with me in allowing him the continuance of our friendship, on no other condition than that of a disclosure of the truth. To entitle ourselves to this confidence we were willing to engage in our turn for the observance of secrecy, so far that no detriment should accrue

accrue from this disclosure to himself or his friend.

Next morning at breakfast our guest appeared with a countenance less expressive of embarrassment than on the last evening. His attention was chiefly engaged by his own thoughts, and little was said till the breakfast was removed. I then reminded him of the incidents of the former day, and mentioned that the uneasiness which thence arose to us, had rather been increased than diminished by time.

“ It is in your power, my young friend,” continued I, “ to add still more to this uneasiness, or to take it entirely away. I had no personal acquaintance with Thomas Welbeck: I have been informed by others that his character, for a certain period, was respectable; but that at length he contracted large debts, and, instead of paying them, absconded. You, it seems, lived with him. On the night of his departure, you are known to have accompanied him across the river; and this it seems is the first of
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your re-appearance on the stage. Welbeck's conduct was dishonest: he ought doubtless to be pursued to his asylum, and compelled to refund his winnings. You confess yourself to know his place of refuge, but urge a promise of secrecy. Know you not that to assist, or connive at the escape of this man was wrong? To have promised to favour his concealment and impunity by silence, was only an aggravation of this wrong. That, however, is past. Your youth and circumstances, hitherto unexplained, may apologize for that misconduct; but it is certainly your duty to repair it to the utmost of your power. Think, whether by disclosing what you know, you will not repair it."

"I have spent most of last night," said the youth, "in reflecting on this subject. I had come to a resolution before you spoke, of confiding to you my simple tale. I perceive in what circumstances I am placed, and that I can keep my hold of your good opinion only by a candid deportment. I
have

have indeed given a promise which it was wrong, or rather absurd in another to exact, and in me to give; yet none but considerations of the highest importance would persuade me to break my promise. No injury will accrue from my disclosure to Welbeck; if there should, dishonest as he was, that would be a sufficient reason for my silence. Wortley will not, in any degree, be benefited by any communication that I can make. Whether I grant or withhold information, my conduct will have influence only on my own happiness; and that influence will justify me in granting it. I received your protection when I was friendless and forlorn. You have a right to know whom it is that you protected. My own fate is connected with the fate of Welbeck; and that connection, together with the interest you are pleased to take in my concerns, because they are mine, will render a tale worthy of attention, which will not be recommended by variety of facts, or skill in

the display of them. Wortley, though passionate, and with regard to me, unjust, may yet be a good man; but I have no desire to make him one of my auditors. You, Sir, may, if you think proper, relate to him afterwards what particulars concerning Welbeck it may be of importance for him to know; but at present it will be well if your indulgence shall support me to the end of a tedious but humble tale."

The eyes of my Eliza sparkled with delight at this proposal. She regarded this youth with a sisterly affection, and considered his candour in this respect, as an unerring test of his rectitude. She was prepared to hear and to forgive the errors of inexperience and precipitation. I did not fully participate in her satisfaction, but was nevertheless most zealously disposed to listen to his narrative.

My engagements obliged me to postpone this rehearsal till late in the evening. Collected then round a cheerful hearth, exempt
4 from

from all likelihood of interruption from without, and our babe's unpractised senses shut up in the sweetest and profoundest sleep, Mervyn, after a pause of recollection, began.

CHAP. II.

A SINGULAR NARRATIVE.

MY natal soil is Chester County. My father had a small farm ✓ on which he has been able, by industry, to maintain himself and a numerous family. He has had many children ; but some defect in the constitution of our mother has been fatal to all of them but me : they died successively as they attained

the age of nineteen or twenty ; and, since I have not yet reached that age, I may reasonably look for the same premature fate. In the spring of last year my mother followed her fifth child to the grave, and three months afterwards died herself.

My constitution has always been frail ; and till the death of my mother, I enjoyed unlimited indulgence. I cheerfully sustained my portion of labour, for that necessity prescribed ; but the intervals were always at my own disposal : and in whatever manner I thought proper to employ them, my plans were encouraged and assisted. Fond appellations, tones of mildness, solicitous attendance when I was sick, deference to my opinions, and veneration for my talents, compose the image which I still retain of my mother. I had the thoughtlessness and presumption of youth ; and now that she is gone, my compunction is awakened by a thousand recollections of my treatment of her. I was indeed guilty of no flagrant acts of contempt or rebellion. Perhaps her
deportment

deportment was inevitably calculated to instil into me a froward and refractory spirit: my faults, however, were speedily followed by repentance; and in the midst of impatience and passion, a look of tender upbraiding from her was always sufficient to melt me into tears, and make me ductile to her will. If sorrow for her loss be an atonement for the offences which I committed during her life, ample atonement has been made,

My father was a man of slender capacity, but of a temper easy and flexible. He was sober and industrious by habit: he was content to be guided by the superior intelligence of his wife. Under this guidance he prospered; but when that was withdrawn, his affairs soon began to betray marks of unskilfulness and negligence. My understanding, perhaps, qualified me to counsel and assist my father; but I was wholly unaccustomed to the task of superintendence: besides, gentleness and fortitude did not descend to me from my mother, and these

were indispensable attributes in a boy who desires to dictate to his grey-headed parent. Time perhaps might have conferred dexterity on me, or prudence on him, had not a most unexpected event given a different direction to my views.

Betty Lawrence was a wild girl from the pine forests of New-Jersey. At the age of ten years she became a bound servant in this city; and, after the expiration of her time, came into my father's neighbourhood in search of employment. She was hired in our family as milk-maid and market-woman. Her features were coarse, her frame robust, her mind totally unlettered; and her morals defective in that point in which female excellence is supposed chiefly to consist. She possessed superabundant health and good humour, and was quite a supportable companion in the hay-field or the barn-yard.

On the death of my mother she was exalted to a somewhat higher station. The same tasks fell to her lot; but the time and manner of performing them were in some degree
submitted

submitted to her own choice. The cows and the dairy were still her province; but in this no one interfered with her, or pretended to prescribe her measures: for this province she seemed not unqualified; and as long as my father was pleased with her management, I had nothing to object.

This state of things continued without material variation for several months. There were appearances in my father's deportment to Betty which excited my reflections, but not my fears. The deference which was occasionally paid to the advice or the claims of this girl, was accounted for by that feebleness of mind which degraded my father in whatever scene he should be placed, to be the tool of others. I had no conception that her claims extended beyond a temporary or superficial gratification.

At length, however, a visible change took place in her manners. A scornful affectation, an awkward dignity began to be assumed: a greater attention was paid to dress, which was of gayer hues and more fashionable texture. I rallied her on these tokens of a sweetheart,

and amused myself with expatiating to her on the qualifications of her lover:—a clownish fellow was frequently her visitant; his attentions did not appear to be discouraged; he therefore was readily supposed to be the man. When pointed out as the favourite, great resentment was expressed, and obscure insinuations were made that her aim was not quite so low as that. These denials I supposed to be customary on such occasions, and considered the continuance of his visits as a sufficient confutation of them.

I frequently spoke of Betty, her newly-acquired dignity, and of the probable cause of her change of manners to my father. When this theme was started, a certain coldness and reserve overspread his features: he dealt in monosyllables, and either laboured to change the subject, or made some excuse for leaving me. This behaviour, though it occasioned surprise, was never very deeply reflected on. My father was old; and the mournful impressions which were made upon him by the death of his wife, the lapse of
almost

almost half a year seemed scarcely to have weakened. Betty had chosen her partner, and I was in daily expectation of receiving a summons to the wedding.

One afternoon this girl dressed herself in the gayest manner, and seemed making preparations for some momentous ceremony. My father had directed me to put the horse to the chaise. On my enquiring whither he was going, he answered me in general terms, that he had some business at a few miles' distance. I offered to go in his stead, but he said that was impossible. I was proceeding to ascertain the possibility of this when he left me to go to a field where his workmen were busy, directing me to inform him when the chaise was ready, and to supply his place while absent in overlooking the workmen.

This office was performed; but before I called him from the field, I exchanged a few words with the milk-maid, who sat on a bench in all the primness of expectation, and decked with the most gaudy plumage. I

rated her imaginary lover for his tardiness, and vowed eternal hatred to them both for not making me a bride's attendant. She listened to me with an air in which embarrassment was mingled sometimes with exultation, and sometimes with malice. I left her at length, and returned to the house not till a late hour. As soon as I entered, my father presented Betty to me as his wife, and desired she might receive that treatment from me which was due to a mother.

It was not till after repeated and solemn declarations from both of them that I was prevailed upon to credit this event. Its effect upon my feelings may be easily conceived. I knew the woman to be rude, ignorant, and licentious. Had I suspected this event, I might have fortified my father's weakness, and enabled him to shun the gulf to which he was hastening ; but my presumption had been careless of the danger. To think that such an one should take the place of my revered mother was intolerable.

To treat her in any way not corresponding with her real merits—to hinder anger and scorn from rising at the sight of her in her new condition, was not in my power. To be degraded to the rank of her servant, to become the sport of her malice and her artifices, was not to be endured. I had no independent provision; but I was the only child of my father, and had reasonably hoped to succeed to his patrimony. On this hope I had built a thousand agreeable visions: I had meditated innumerable projects which the possession of this estate would enable me to execute. I had no wish beyond the trade of agriculture, and beyond the opulence which a hundred acres would give.

These visions were now at an end. No doubt her own interest would be to this woman the supreme law; and this would be considered as irreconcilably hostile to mine. My father would easily be moulded to her purpose, and that act easily extorted from him which should reduce me to beggary. She had a gross and perverse taste: she had a

numerous kindred indigent and hungry. On these his substance would speedily be lavished. Me she hated, because she was conscious of having injured me, because she knew that I held her in contempt, and because I had detected her in an illicit intercourse with the son of a neighbour.

The house in which I lived was no longer my own, nor even my father's. Hitherto I had thought and acted in it with the freedom of a master; but now I was become in my own conceptions, an alien and an enemy to the roof under which I was born. Every tie which had bound me to it was dissolved, or converted into something which repelled me to a distance from it. I was a guest, whose presence was borne with anger and impatience.

I was fully impressed with the necessity of removal, but I knew not whither to go, or what kind of subsistence to seek. My father had been a Scottish emigrant, and had no kindred on this side of the ocean. My mother's family lived in New-Hampshire, and

and long separation had extinguished all the rights of relationship in her offspring. Tilling the earth was my only profession, and to profit by my skill in it, it would be necessary to become a day-labourer in the service of strangers ; but this was a destiny to which I, who had so long enjoyed the pleasures of independence and command, could not suddenly reconcile myself. It occurred to me that the city might afford me an asylum. A short day's journey would transport me into it. I had been there twice or thrice in my life, but only for a few hours each time. I knew not a human face, and was a stranger to its modes and dangers. I was qualified for no employment compatible with a town life, but that of the pen. This, indeed, had ever been a favourite tool with me ; and though it may appear somewhat strange, it is no less true that I had had nearly as much practice at the quill as at the mattock. But the sum of my skill lay in tracing distinct characters ; I had used it merely to transcribe what others had written, or to give form to
my

my own conceptions. Whether the city would afford me employment as a mere copyist, sufficiently lucrative, was a point on which I possessed no means of information.

My determination was hastened by the conduct of my new mother ; my conjectures as to the course she would pursue with regard to me, had not been erroneous. My father's deportment in a short time grew sullen and austere. Directions were given in a magisterial tone, and any remissness in the execution of his orders was rebuked with an air of authority. At length these rebukes were followed by certain intimations that I was now old enough to provide for myself—that it was time to think of some employment by which I might secure a livelihood—that it was a shame for me to spend my youth in idleness—that what he had gained was by his own labour, and I must be indebted for my living to the same source.

These hints were easily understood. At first they excited indignation and grief:

I knew

I knew the source whence they sprung, and was merely able to suppress the utterance of my feelings in her presence. My looks, however, were abundantly significant, and my company became hourly more insupportable. Abstracted from these considerations, my father's remonstrances were not destitute of weight ; he gave me being, but sustenance ought surely to be my own gift. In the use of that for which he had been indebted to his own exertions, he might reasonably consult his own choice. He assumed no controul over me—he merely did what he would with his own ; and so far from fettering my liberty, he exhorted me to use it for my own benefit, and to make provision for myself.

I now reflected that there were other manual occupations besides that of the plough ; among these, none had fewer disadvantages than that of carpenter or cabinet-maker. I had no knowledge of this art ; but neither custom, nor law, nor the impenetrableness of the mystery required me to
serve

serve a seven years' apprenticeship to it. A master in this trade might possibly be persuaded to take me under his tuition; two or three years would suffice to give me the requisite skill. Meanwhile, my father would perhaps consent to bear the cost of my maintenance:—nobody could live upon less than I was willing to do.

I mentioned these ideas to my father, but he merely commended my intentions without offering to assist me in the execution of them; he had full employment, he said, for all the profits of his ground. No doubt, if I would bind myself to serve four or five years, my master would be at the expence of my subsistence. Be that as it would, I must look for nothing from him; I had shewn very little regard for his happiness—I had refused all marks of respect to a woman who was entitled to it from her relationship to him. He did not see why he should treat as a son, one who refused what was due to him as a father; he thought it right that I should henceforth maintain myself; he did not want
my

my services on the farm, and the sooner I quitted his house, the better.

I retired from this conference with a resolution to follow the advice that was given ; I saw that henceforth I must be my own protector, and wondered at the folly that detained me so long under his roof ;—to leave it was now become indispensable, and there could be no reason for delaying my departure for a single hour. I determined to bend my course to the city ; the scheme foremost in my mind was to apprentice myself to some mechanical trade. I did not overlook the evils of constraint, and the dubiousness as to the character of the master I should chuse ; I was not without hopes that accident would suggest a different expedient, and enable me to procure an immediate subsistence without forfeiting my liberty.

I determined to commence my journey the next morning : no wonder the prospect of so considerable a change in my condition should deprive me of sleep. I spent the night ruminating on the future, and in painting

painting to my fancy the adventures which I should be likely to meet. The foresight of man is in proportion to his knowledge :—no wonder that, in my state of profound ignorance, not the faintest preconception should be formed of the events that really befel me. My temper was inquisitive, but there was nothing in the scene to which I was going, from which my curiosity expected to derive gratification ; discords and evil smells, unfavoury food, unwholesome labour, and irksome companions were, in my opinion, the unavoidable attendants of a city.

My best clothes were of the homeliest texture and shape ; my whole stock of linen consisted of three check shirts. Part of my winter evening's employment, since the death of my mother, consisted in knitting my own stockings ; of these I had three pair, one of which I put on, and the rest I formed, together with two shirts, into a bundle. Three quarter-dollar pieces composed my whole fortune in money.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

A FIRST ADVENTURE.

I ROSE at the dawn, and without asking or bestowing a blessing, sallied forth into the high road to the city which passed near the house ; I left nothing behind, the loss of which I regretted. I had purchased most of my own books with the product of my own separate industry ; and their number being of course small, I had, by incessant application, learned the whole of them by rote. They had ceased, therefore, to be of any further use ; I left them, without reluctance, to the fate for which I knew them

them to be reserved, that of affording food and habitation to mice.

I trod this unwonted path with all the fearlessness of youth ; in spite of the motives to despondency and apprehension incident to my state, my heels were light, and my heart joyous.—“Now,” said I, “I am mounted into man ; I must build a name and a fortune for myself ;—strange if this intellect and these hands will not supply me with an honest livelihood. I will try the city in the first place ; but if that should fail, resources are still left to me—I will resume my post in the corn-field and thrashing floor, to which I shall always have access, and where I shall always be happy.”

I had proceeded some miles on my journey, when I began to feel the inroads of hunger. I might have stopped at any farmhouse, and have breakfasted for nothing—it was prudent to husband, with the utmost care, my slender stock ; but I felt reluctance to beg as long as I had the means of buying, and I imagined that coarse bread and a little
milk

milk would cost little even at a tavern, when any farmer was willing to bestow them for nothing. My resolution was farther influenced by the appearance of a sign-post. What excuse could I make for begging a breakfast with an inn at hand, and silver in my pocket?

I stopped accordingly, and breakfasted; the landlord was remarkably attentive and obliging, but his bread was stale, his milk sour, and his cheese the greenest imaginable. I disdained to animadvert on these defects, naturally supposing that his house could furnish no better.

Having finished my meal, I put, without speaking, one of my pieces into his hand; this deportment I conceived to be highly becoming, and to indicate a liberal and manly spirit: I always regarded with contempt a scrupulous maker of bargains. He received the money with a complaisant obeisance.—“Right,” said he—“*just* the money, Sir! You are on foot, Sir!—a pleasant way of travelling,

travelling, Sir. I wish you a good day, Sir!"—So saying, he walked away.

This proceeding was wholly unexpected; I conceived myself entitled to at least three-fourths of it in change. The first impulse was to call him back, and contest the equity of his demand, but a moment's reflection shewed me the absurdity of such conduct. I resumed my journey with spirits somewhat depressed. I have heard of voyagers, and wanderers in deserts who were willing to give a casket of gems for a cup of cold water. I had not supposed my own condition to be in any respect similar, yet I had just given one-third of my estate for a breakfast.

I stopped at noon at another inn; I counted on purchasing a dinner for the same price, since I meant to content myself with the same fare. A large company was just sitting down to a smoking banquet—the landlord invited me to join them. I took my place at the table, but was furnished with bread
and

and milk. Being prepared to depart, I took him aside. "What is to pay?" said I.

"Did you drink any thing, Sir?"

"Certainly—I drank the milk which was furnished."

"But any liquors, Sir?"

"No."

He deliberated a moment, and then assuming an air of disinterestedness—"Tis our custom to charge dinner and club; but as you drank nothing, we'll let the club go. A mere dinner is half a dollar, Sir."

He had no leisure to attend to my fluctuations. After debating with myself on what was to be done, I concluded that compliance was best; and leaving the money at the bar, resumed my way.

I had not performed more than half my journey, yet my purse was entirely exhausted: this was a specimen of the cost incurred by living at an inn. If I entered the city, a tavern must, at least for some time, be my abode, but I had not a farthing remaining

to

to defray my charges. My father had formerly entertained a boarder for a dollar per week ; and, in a case of need, I was willing to subsist upon coarser fare, and lie on a harder bed than those with which our guest had been supplied. These facts had been the foundation of my negligence on this occasion.

What was now to be done ? To return to my paternal mansion was impossible ; to relinquish my design of entering the city, and to seek a temporary asylum, if not permanent employment, at some one of the plantations within view, was the most obvious expedient. These deliberations did not slacken my pace ; I was almost unmindful of my way, when I found I had passed Schuylkill at the upper bridge. I was now within the precincts of the city, and night was hastening ; It behoved me to come to a speedy decision.

Suddenly I recollected that I had not paid the customary toll at the bridge, neither had I money wherewith to pay it. A demand of payment would have suddenly
arrested

arrested my progress ; and so slight an incident would have precluded that wonderful destiny to which I was reserved. The obstacle that would have hindered my advance, now prevented my return ; scrupulous honesty did not require me to turn back, and awaken the vigilance of the toll-gatherer. I had nothing to pay, and by returning I should only double my debt.

“ Let it stand,” said I, “ where it does ; all that honour enjoins, is to pay when I am able.”

I adhered to the cross-ways till I reached Market-street. Night had fallen, and a triple row of lamps presented a spectacle enchanting and new. My personal cares were for a time lost in the tumultuous sensations with which I was now engrossed. I had never visited the city at this hour : when my last visit was paid, I was a mere child ; the novelty which environed every object was therefore nearly absolute. I proceeded with more cautious steps, but was still absorbed in attention to passing objects. I

reached the market-house, and, entering it, indulged myself in new delight and new wonder.

I need not remark that our ideas of magnificence and splendour are merely comparative; yet you may be prompted to smile when I tell you that, in walking through this avenue, I for a moment conceived myself transported to the hall “pendant with many a row of starry lamps and blazing crescents fed by naphtha and asphaltos.” That this transition from my homely and quiet retreat had been effected in so few hours, wore the aspect of miracle or magic.

I proceeded from one of these buildings to another, till I reached their termination in Front-street. Here my progress was checked, and I sought repose to my weary limbs by seating myself on a stall. No wonder some fatigue was felt by me, unaccustomed as I was to strenuous exertions, since, exclusive of the minutes spent at breakfast and dinner, I had travelled fifteen hours and forty-five miles.

I began

I began now to reflect, with some earnestness, on my condition ; I was a stranger, friendless and moneyless—I was unable to purchase food and shelter, and was wholly unused to the business of begging. Hunger was the only serious inconvenience to which I was immediately exposed. I had no objection to spend the night in the spot where I then sat—I had no fear that my visions would be troubled by the officers of police. It was no crime to be without a home ; but how should I supply my present cravings, and the cravings of to-morrow ?

At length it occurred to me that one of our country neighbours was probably at this time in the city ; he kept a store, as well as cultivated a farm. He was a plain and well-meaning man ; and should I be so fortunate as to meet him, his superior knowledge of the city might be of essential benefit to me in my present forlorn circumstances ; his generosity might likewise induce him to lend me as much as would purchase one meal. I had formed the resolution to leave the city

next day, and was astonished at the folly that had led me into it; but, meanwhile, my physical wants must be supplied.

Where should I look for this man? In the course of conversation I recollected him to have referred to the place of his temporary abode. It was an inn; but the sign, or the name of the keeper, for some time withstood all my efforts to recal them.

At length I lighted on the last—it was Lesher's Tavern. I immediately set out in search of it. After many enquiries, I at last arrived at the door. I was preparing to enter the house, when I perceived that my bundle was gone—I had left it on the stall where I had been sitting. People were perpetually passing to and fro—it was scarcely possible not to have been noticed; no one that observed it, would fail to make it his prey—yet it was of too much value to me, to allow me to be governed by a bare probability. I resolved to lose not a moment in returning.

With some difficulty I retraced my steps,
but

but the bundle had disappeared. The clothes were in themselves of small value, but they constituted the whole of my wardrobe; and I now reflected that they were capable of being transmuted, by the pawn or sale of them, into food. There were other wretches as indigent as I was, and I consoled myself by thinking that my shirts and stockings might furnish a seasonable covering to their nakedness; but there was a relique concealed within this bundle, the loss of which could scarcely be endured by me—it was the portrait of a young man who died three years ago at my father's house, drawn by his own hand.

He was discovered one morning in the orchard with many marks of insanity upon him; his air and dress bespoke some elevation of rank and fortune. My mother's compassion was excited; and, as his singularities were harmless, an asylum was afforded him, though he was unable to pay for it. He was constantly declaiming, in an incoherent manner, about some mistress who had proved faithless;

faithless ; his speeches seemed, however, like the rantings of an actor, to be rehearsed by rote, or for the sake of exercise. He was totally careless of his person and health ; and, by repeated negligences of this kind, at last contracted a fever, of which he speedily died. The name which he assumed was Clavering.

He gave no distinct account of his family, but stated in loose terms that they were residents in England, high born and wealthy—that they had denied him the woman whom he loved, and banished him to America, under penalty of death if he should dare to return, and that they had refused him all means of subsistence in a foreign land. He predicted, in his wild and declamatory way, his own death. He was very skilful at the pencil, and drew his portrait a short time before his dissolution—presented it to me, and charged me to preserve it in remembrance of him. My mother loved the youth because he was amiable and unfortunate, and chiefly because she fancied a very powerful resemblance between his countenance and
mine.

mine. I was too young to build affection on any rational foundation. I loved him, for what reason I know not, with an ardour unusual at my age, and which this portrait had contributed to prolong and to cherish.

In thus finally leaving my home, I was careful not to leave this picture behind ; I wrapped it in paper, in which a few elegiac stanzas were inscribed in my own hand, and with my utmost elegance of penmanship ; I then placed it in a leathern case, which, for greater security, was deposited in the center of my bundle. It will occur to you, perhaps, that it would have been safer in some fold or pocket of the clothes which I wore ; I was of a different opinion, and was now to endure the penalty of my error.

It was in vain to heap execrations on my negligence, or to consume the little strength left to me in regrets. I returned once more to the tavern, and made enquiries for Mr. Capper, the person whom I have just mentioned as my father's neighbour. I was informed that Capper was now in town—that

he had lodged; on the last night, at this house—that he had expected to do the same to-night, but a gentleman had called ten minutes ago, whose invitation to lodge with him to-night had been accepted; they had just gone out together.—“Who,” I asked, “was the gentleman?”

The landlord had no knowledge of him; he knew neither his place of abode nor his name.—“Was Mr. Capper expected to return hither in the morning?”

“No; he had heard the stranger propose to Mr. Capper to go with him into the country to-morrow, and Mr. Capper he believed had assented.

This disappointment was peculiarly severe; I had lost, by my own negligence, the only opportunity that would offer, of meeting my friend: had even the recollection of my loss been postponed for three minutes, I should have entered the house, and a meeting would have been secured. I could discover no other expedient to obviate the present evil. My heart began now for the first time

time to droop ; I looked back, with nameless emotions, on the days of my infancy—I called up the image of my mother—I reflected on the infatuation of my surviving parent, and the usurpation of the detestable Betty with horror—I viewed myself as the most calamitous and desolate of human beings.

At this time I was sitting in the common room ; there were others in the same apartment, lounging, or whistling, or singing. I noticed them not, but, leaning my head upon my hand, delivered myself up to painful and intense meditation ; from this I was roused by some one placing himself on the bench near me, and addressing me thus—

“ Pray, Sir, if you will excuse me, who was the person whom you were looking for just now ? Perhaps I can give you the information you want. If I can, you will be very welcome to it.”

I fixed my eyes with some eagerness on the person that spoke ; he was a young man, expensively and fashionably dressed, whose mien was very prepossessing, and

whose countenance bespoke some portion of discernment. I described to him the man whom I sought.

“ I am in search of the same man myself,” said he, “ but I expect to meet him here. He may lodge elsewhere, but he promised to meet me here at half after nine. I have no doubt he will fulfil his promise, so that you will meet the gentleman.”

I was highly gratified by this information, and thanked my informant with some degree of warmth. My gratitude he did not notice, but continued.

“ In order to beguile expectation, I have ordered supper ;—will you do me the favour to partake with me, unless indeed you have supped already ?”

I was obliged, somewhat awkwardly, to decline his invitation, conscious as I was that the means of payment were not in my power. He continued, however, to urge my compliance, till at length it was, though reluctantly, yielded. My chief motive was the certainty of seeing Capper.

My

My new acquaintance was exceedingly conversible, but his conversation was chiefly characterized by frankness and good-humour. My reserve gradually diminished; and I ventured to inform him, in general terms, of my former condition and present views. He listened to my details with seeming attention, and commented on them with some judiciousness; his statements, however, tended to discourage me from remaining in the city.

Meanwhile, the hour passed, and Capper did not appear. I noticed this circumstance to him with no little solicitude; he said that possibly he might have forgotten or neglected his engagement—his affair was not of the highest importance, and might be readily postponed to a future opportunity. He perceived that my vivacity was greatly damped by this intelligence; he importuned me to disclose the cause—he made himself very merry with my distress when it was at length discovered. As to the expence of supper, I had partaken of it at his invitation; he therefore should of course be charged with

it. As to a lodging, he had a chamber and a bed, which he would insist upon my sharing with him.

My faculties were thus kept upon the stretch of wonder—every new act of kindness in this man surpassed the fondest expectation that I had formed. I saw no reason why I should be treated with benevolence—I should have acted in the same manner if placed in the same circumstances, yet it appeared incongruous and inexplicable. I know not whence my ideas of human nature were derived—they certainly were not the offspring of my own feelings; these would have taught me that interest and duty were blended in every act of generosity.

I did not come into the world without my scruples and suspicions; I was more apt to impute kindness to sinister and hidden, than to obvious and laudable motives. I paused to reflect upon the possible designs of this person. What end could be served by this behaviour? I was no subject of violence or fraud—I had neither trinket nor coin to stimulate

stimulate the treachery of others ; what was offered was merely lodging for the night. Was this an act of such transcendent disinterestedness as to be incredible ? My garb was meaner than that of my companion, but my intellectual accomplishments were at least upon a level with his. Why should he be supposed to be insensible to my claims upon his kindness ? I was a youth destitute of experience, money, and friends ; but I was not devoid of all mental and personal endowments. That my merit should be discovered even on such slender intercourse, had surely nothing in it that had shocked belief.

While I was thus deliberating, my new friend was earnest in his solicitations for my company ; he remarked my hesitation, but ascribed it to a wrong cause.

“ Come,” said he, “ I can guess your objections, and can obviate them. You are afraid of being ushered into company ; and people who have passed their lives like you, have a wonderful antipathy to strange faces :

but this is bed-time with our family, so that we can defer your introduction to them till to-morrow. We may go to our chamber without being seen by any but servants."

I had not been aware of this circumstance — my reluctance flowed from a different cause; but now that the inconveniences of ceremony were mentioned, they appeared to me of considerable weight. I was well pleased that they should thus be avoided, and consented to accompany him.

We passed several streets, and turned several corners; at last he led me into a kind of court which seemed to be chiefly occupied by stables.

"We will go," said he, "by the back way into the house; we shall thus save ourselves the necessity of entering the parlour, where some of the family may still be."

My companion was as talkative as ever, but said nothing from which I could gather any knowledge of the number, character, and condition of his family.

CHAP. IV.

A DANGEROUS SITUATION.

WE arrived at a brick wall, through which we passed by a gate into an extensive court, or yard: the darkness would allow me to see nothing but outlines; compared with the pigmy dimensions of my father's wooden hovel, the buildings before me were of gigantic loftiness. The horses were here far more magnificently accommodated than I had been. By a large door we entered an elevated hall.

"Stay here," said he, "just while I fetch a light."

He

He returned with a candle, before I had time to ponder on my present situation.

We now ascended a staircase, covered with painted canvas. No one whose inexperience is less than mine, can imagine to himself the impressions made upon me by surrounding objects. The height to which this staircase ascended, its dimensions and its ornaments, appeared to me a combination of all that was pompous and superb.

We stopped not till we had reached the third story: here my companion unlocked and led the way into a chamber.

“This,” said he, “is my room: permit me to welcome you into it.”

I had no time to examine this room before, by some accident, the candle was extinguished.

“Curse upon my carelessness!” said he; “I must go down again, and light the candle. I will return in a twinkling: meanwhile you may undress yourself, and go to bed.”

He

He went out; and as I afterwards recollected, locked the door.

I was not indisposed to follow his advice, but my curiosity would first be gratified by a survey of the room. Its height and spaciousness were imperfectly discernible by starlight, and by gleams from a street-lamp. The floor was covered with a carpet, and the walls with brilliant hangings; the bed and windows were shrouded by curtains of a rich texture and glossy hue. Hitherto I had merely read of these things: I knew them to be the decorations of opulence; and yet as I viewed them, and remembered where and what I was on the same hour the preceding day, I could scarcely believe myself awake, or that my senses were not beguiled by some spell.

“Where,” said I, “will this adventure terminate? I rise on the morrow with the dawn, and speed into the country. When this night is remembered, how like a vision will it appear! If I tell the tale by a kitchen fire, my veracity will be disputed; I shall

I shall be ranked with the story-tellers of Shirauz and Bagdad."

Though busied in these reflections, I was not inattentive to the progress of time. Methought my companion was remarkably dilatory; he went merely to relight his candle, but certainly he might during this time have performed the operation ten times over: some unforeseen accident might occasion his delay.

Another interval passed, and no tokens of his coming. I began now to grow uneasy: I was unable to account for his detention. Was not some treachery designed? I went to the door, and found that it was locked. This heightened my suspicions: I was alone, a stranger, in an upper room of the house. Should my conductor have disappeared by design or accident, and some one of the family should find me here, what would be the consequence? Should I not be arrested as a thief, and conveyed to prison? My transition from the street to this chamber would not be more rapid than my passage hence to a gaol.

These

These ideas struck me with panic : I revolved them anew, but they only acquired greater plausibility. No doubt I had been the victim of malicious artifice : inclination, however, conjured up opposite sentiments, and my fears began to subside. What motive, I asked, could induce a human being to inflict wanton injury ? I could not account for his delay, but how numberless were the contingencies that might occasion it ?

I was somewhat comforted by these reflections ; but the consolation they afforded was short-lived. I was listening with the utmost eagerness to catch the sound of a foot, when a noise was indeed heard, but totally unlike a step : it was human breath struggling, as it were, for passage. On the first effort of attention, it appeared like a groan : whence it arose I could not tell. He that uttered it was near—perhaps in the room.

Presently the same noise was again heard, and now I perceived that it came from the bed : it was accompanied with a motion like
some

some one changing his posture. What I at first conceived to be a groan, appeared now to be nothing more than the respiration of a sleeping man. What should I infer from this incident? My companion did not apprize me that the apartment was inhabited. Was his imposture a jestful, or a wicked one?

There was no need to deliberate: there were no means of concealment or escape; the person would some time awake, and detect me; the interval would only be fraught with agony, and it was wise to shorten it. Should I not withdraw the curtain, awake the person, and encounter at once all the consequences of my situation? I glided softly to the bed, when the thought occurred—may not the sleeper be a female?

I cannot describe the mixture of dread and of shame which glowed in my veins. The light in which such a visitant would be probably regarded by a woman's fears, the precipitate alarms that might be given, the injury which I might unknowingly inflict, or
undeservedly

undeservedly suffer, threw my thoughts into painful confusion. My presence might pollute a spotless reputation, or furnish fuel to jealousy.

Still, though it were a female, would not least injury be done by gently interrupting her slumber? But the question of sex still remained to be decided. For this end I once more approached the bed, and drew aside the silk. The sleeper was a babe: this I discovered by the glimmer of a street lamp.

Part of my solitudes were now removed: it was plain that this chamber belonged to a nurse or a mother. She had not yet come to bed. Perhaps it was a married pair, and their approach might be momentarily expected. I pictured to myself their entrance and my own detection; I could imagine no consequence that was not disastrous and horrible, and from which I would not at any price escape. I again examined the door, and found that egress by this avenue was impossible. There were other doors in this room.

Any

Any practicable expedient in this extremity was to be pursued. One of these was bolted. I unfastened it, and found a considerable space within. Should I immure myself in this closet, I saw no benefit that would finally result from it. I discovered that there was a bolt on the inside, which would somewhat contribute to security: this being drawn, no one could enter without breaking the door.

I had scarcely paused when the long expected sound of footsteps was heard in the entry. Was it my companion or a stranger? If it were the latter, I had not yet mustered courage sufficient to meet him. I cannot applaud the magnanimity of my proceeding; but no one can expect intrepid or judicious measures from one in my circumstances. I stepped into the closet, and closed the door; some one immediately after unlocked the chamber-door. He was unattended with a light. The footsteps, as they moved along the carpet, could scarcely be heard.

I waited impatiently for some token by
which

which I might be governed: I put my ear to the keyhole, and at length heard a voice, but not that of my companion, exclaim, somewhat above a whisper—

“Smiling cherub! safe and sound, I see. Would to God my experiment may succeed, and that thou mayst find a mother where I have found a wife!”

There he stopped. He appeared to kiss the babe, and presently retiring, locked the door after him.

These words were capable of no consistent meaning: they served at least to assure me that I had been treacherously dealt with. This chamber, it was manifest, did not belong to my companion: I put up prayers to my deity that he would deliver me from these toils. What a condition was mine? Immersed in palpable darkness?—shut up in this unknown recess!—lurking like a robber!

My meditations were disturbed by new sounds. The door was unlocked, more
than

than one person entered the apartment, and light streamed through the keyhole. I looked; but the aperture was too small, and the figures passed too quickly to permit me the sight of them. I bent my ear, and this imparted some more authentic information.

The man, as I judged by the voice, was the same who had just departed. Rustling of silk denoted his companion to be a female. Some words being uttered by the man in too low a key to be overheard, the lady burst into a passion of tears. He strove to comfort her by soothing tones and tender appellations.

“How can it be helped?” said he. “It is time to resume your courage. Your duty to yourself and to me requires you to subdue this unreasonable grief.”

He spoke frequently in this strain; but all he said seemed to have little influence in pacifying the lady. At length, however, her sobs began to lessen in vehemence and frequency. He exhorted her to seek for
some

some repose. Apparently she prepared to comply; and conversation was for a few minutes intermitted.

I could not but advert to the possibility that some occasion to examine the closet in which I was immured, might occur. I knew not in what manner to demean myself if this should take place. I had no option at present: by withdrawing myself from view, I had lost the privilege of an upright deportment; yet the thought of spending the night in this spot was not to be endured.

Gradually I began to view the project of bursting from the closet, and trusting to the energy of truth and of an artless tale with more complacency. More than once my hand was placed upon the bolt, but withdrawn by a sudden faltering of resolution. When one attempt failed, I recurred once more to such reflections as were adapted to renew my purpose.

I preconcerted the address which I should use. I resolved to be perfectly explicit; to withhold no particular of my adventures

from the moment of my arrival. My description must necessarily suit some person within their knowledge. All I should want was liberty to depart; but if this were not allowed, I might at least hope to escape any ill treatment, and to be confronted with my betrayer: in that case I did not fear to make him the attester of my innocence.

Influenced by these considerations, I once more touched the bolt. At that moment the lady shrieked, and exclaimed—

“ Good God ! what is here ? ”

An interesting conversation ensued. The object that excited her astonishment was the child. I collected from what passed that the discovery was wholly unexpected by her. Her husband acted as if equally unaware of this event: he joined in all her exclamations of wonder and all her wild conjectures. When these were somewhat exhausted, he artfully insinuated the propriety of bestowing care upon the little foundling. I now found that her grief had been occasioned by the recent loss of her own offspring. She was
for

for some time averse to her husband's proposal ; but at length was persuaded to take the babe to her bosom, and give it nourishment.

This incident had diverted my mind from its favourite project, and filled me with speculations on the nature of the scene. One explication was obvious—that the husband was the parent of this child, and had used this singular expedient to procure for it the maternal protection of his wife; it would soon claim from her all the fondness which she entertained for her own progeny. No suspicion probably had yet, or would hereafter occur, with regard to its true parent. If her character be distinguished by the usual attributes of women, the knowledge of this truth may convert her love into hatred. I reflected with amazement on the slowness of that thread by which human passions are led from their true direction. With no less amazement did I remark the complexity of incidents by which I had been empowered to communicate to her

this truth. How baseless are the structures of falsehood which we build in opposition to the system of eternal nature ! If I should escape undetected from this recess, it will be true that I never saw the face of either of these persons ; and yet I am acquainted with the most secret transaction of their lives.

My own situation was now more critical than before. The lights were extinguished, and the parties had sought repose. To issue from the closet now would be eminently dangerous. My councils were again at a stand, and my designs frustrated : meanwhile the persons did not drop their discourse, and I thought myself justified in listening. Many facts of the most secret and momentous nature were alluded to. Some allusions were unintelligible ; to others I was able to affix a plausible meaning ; and some were palpable enough. Every word that was uttered on that occasion is indelibly imprinted on my memory. Perhaps the singularity of my circumstances, and my previous ignorance
of

of what was passing in the world, contributed to render me a greedy listener. Most that was said I shall overlook; but one part of the conversation it will be necessary to repeat.

A large company had assembled that evening at their house. They criticized the characters and manners of several: at last the husband said—

“What think you of the Nabob, especially when he talked about riches? How artfully he encourages the notion of his poverty!—yet not a soul believes him. I cannot, for my part, account for that scheme of his. I half suspect that his wealth flows from a bad source, since he is so studious of concealing it.”

“Perhaps, after all,” said the lady, “you are mistaken as to his wealth.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the other. “Mark how he lives. Have I not seen his bank account? His deposits since he has been here amount to no less than half a million.”

“ Heaven grant that it be so !” said the lady, with a sigh : “ I shall think with less aversion of your scheme. If poor Tom’s fortune be made, and he not the worse, or but little the worse on that account, I shall think it on the whole best.”

“ That,” replied he, “ is what reconciles me to the scheme. To him thirty thousand are nothing.”

“ But will he not suspect that you are concerned in it ?”

“ How can he ? Will I not appear to lose as well as himself ? Tom is my brother ; but who can be supposed to answer for a brother’s integrity ?—But he cannot suspect either of us. Nothing less than a miracle can bring our plot to light. Besides, this man is not what he ought to be ; he will, some time or other, come out to be a grand impostor. He makes money by other arts than bargain and sale. He has found his way by some means to the Portuguese Treasury.”

Here

Here the conversation took a new direction; and, after some time, the silence of sleep ensued.

“Who,” thought I, “is this Nabob, who counts his dollars by half millions, and on whom it seems as if some fraud was intended to be practised?—Amidst their wariness and subtilty how little are they aware that their conversation has been overheard? By means as inscrutable as those which conducted me hither, I may hereafter be enabled to profit by a detection of this plot.”—But, meanwhile, what was I to do? How was I to effect my escape from this perilous asylum?

After much reflection, it occurred to me that to gain the street without exciting their notice was not utterly impossible. Sleep does not commonly end of itself, unless at a certain period. What impediments were there between me and liberty which I could not remove, and remove with so much caution as to escape notice? Motion and sound inevitably go together, but every sound is not attended to. The doors of

the closet and the chamber did not creak upon their hinges. The latter might be locked: this I was able to ascertain only by experiment. If it were so, yet the key was probably in the lock, and might be used without much noise.

I waited till their slow and hoarser respirations shewed them to be both asleep. Just then, on changing my position, my head struck against some things which depended from the ceiling of the closet. They were implements of some kind, which rattled against each other in consequence of this unlucky blow. I was fearful lest this noise should alarm them, as the closet was little distant from the bed. The breathing of one instantly ceased; and a motion was made as if the head were lifted from the pillow. This motion, which was made by the husband, awaked his companion, who exclaimed:

“What is the matter?”

“Something, I believe,” replied he,
“in the closet. If I was not dreaming, I
heard

heard the pistols strike against each other as if some one was taking them down."

This intimation was well suited to alarm the lady. She besought him to ascertain the matter. This to my utter dismay he at first consented to do ; but presently observed that probably his ears had misinformed him : it was hardly possible that the sound proceeded from them : it might be a rat, or his own fancy might have fashioned it. It is not easy to describe my trepidations while this conference was holding. I saw how easily their slumber was disturbed. The obstacles to my escape were less surmountable than I had imagined.

In a little time all was again still. I waited till the usual tokens of sleep were distinguishable. I once more resumed my attempt. The bolt was withdrawn with all possible slowness ; but I could by no means prevent all sound. My state was full of inquietude and suspense ; my attention being painfully divided between the bolt and the condition of the sleepers. The difficulty

lay in giving that degree of force which was barely sufficient. Perhaps not less than fifteen minutes were consumed in this operation. At last it was happily effected, and the door was cautiously opened.

Emerging as I did from utter darkness, the light admitted into three windows, produced to my eyes a considerable illumination. Objects which on my first entrance into this apartment were invisible, were now clearly discerned. The bed was shrouded by curtains; yet I shrunk back into my covert, fearful of being seen. To facilitate my escape, I put off my shoes. My mind was so full of objects of more urgent moment, that the propriety of taking them with me never occurred. I left them in the closet.

I now glided across the apartment to the door. I was not a little discouraged by observing that the key was wanting:—my whole hope depended on the omission to lock it. In my haste to ascertain this point I made some noise, which again roused one
of

of the sleepers. He started, and cried—
“ Who is there ? ”

I now regarded my case as desperate, and detection as inevitable. My apprehensions rather than my caution kept me mute. I shrunk to the wall, and waited in a kind of agony for the moment that should decide my fate.

The lady was again roused. In answer to her enquiries, her husband said that some one he believed was at the door, but there was no danger of their entering, for he had locked it, and the key was in his pocket.

My courage was completely annihilated by this intelligence. My resources were now at an end. I could only remain in this spot till the morning light, which could be at no great distance, should discover me. My inexperience disabled me from estimating all the perils of my situation. Perhaps I had no more than temporary inconveniences to dread :—my intention was innocent, and I had been betrayed into my
E 6 present

present situation, not by my own wickedness, but the wickedness of others.

I was deeply impressed with the ambiguousness which would necessarily rest upon my motives, and the scrutiny to which they would be subjected:—I shuddered at the bare possibility of being ranked with thieves. These reflections again gave edge to my ingenuity in search of the means of escape. I had carefully attended to the circumstances of their entrance. Possibly the act of locking had been unnoticed; but was it not likewise possible that this person had been mistaken? The key was gone.—Would this have been the case if the door were unlocked.

My fears, rather than my hopes, impelled me to make the experiment. I drew back the latch; and, to my unspeakable joy, the door opened.

I passed through, and explored my way to the staircase. I descended till I reached the bottom: I could not recollect with accuracy the position of the door leading into the

the court; but by carefully feeling along the wall with my hands, I at length discovered it—it was fastened by several bolts and a lock. The bolts were easily withdrawn, but the key was removed: I knew not where it was deposited. I thought I had reached the threshold of liberty, but here was an impediment that threatened to be insurmountable.

But if doors could not be passed, windows might be unbarred. I remembered that my companion had gone into a door on the left hand in search of a light. I searched for this door. Fortunately it was fastened only by a bolt: it admitted me into a room which I carefully explored till I reached a window. I will not dwell on my efforts to unbar this entrance. Suffice it to say that, after much exertion and frequent mistakes, I at length found my way into the yard, and thence passed into the court.

CHAP. V.

SINGULAR RENCONTRE.

NOW I was once more on public ground. By so many anxious efforts had I disengaged myself from the perilous precincts of private property—as many stratagems as are usually made to enter a house, had been employed by me to get out of it. I was urged to the use of them by my fears; yet so far from carrying off spoil, I had escaped with the loss of an essential part of my dress.

I had now leisure to reflect. I seated myself on the ground, and reviewed the scenes through which I had just passed. I
began

began to think that my industry had been misemployed. Suppose I had met the person on his first entrance into his chamber, was the truth so utterly wild as not to have found credit? Since the door was locked, and there was no other avenue, what other statement but the true one would account for my being found there? This deportment had been worthy of an honest purpose. My betrayer probably expected that this would be the issue of his jest. My rustic simplicity, he might think, would suggest no more ambiguous or elaborate expedient; he might likewise have predetermined to interfere if my safety had been really endangered.

On the morrow the two doors of the chamber, and the window below, will be found unclosed;—they will suspect a design to pillage, but their searches will terminate in nothing but in the discovery of a pair of clumsy and dusty shoes in the closet. Now that I was safe, I could not help smiling at the picture which my fancy drew of their anxiety and wonder;—these thoughts, however,

ever, gave place to more momentous considerations.

I could not image to myself a more perfect example of indigence than I now exhibited; there was no being in the city on whose kindness I had any claim. Money I had none, and what I then wore comprised my whole stock of moveables. I had just lost my shoes, and this loss rendered my stockings of no use. My dignity remonstrated against a barefoot pilgrimage, but to this necessity now reconciled me. I threw my stockings between the bars of a stable window, belonging, as I thought, to the mansion I had just left; these, together with my shoes, I left to pay the cost of my entertainment.

I saw that the city was no place for me. The end that I had had in view, of procuring some mechanical employment, could only be obtained by the use of means; but what means to pursue I knew not. This night's perils and deceptions gave me a distaste to a city life, and my ancient occupations rose to my view, enhanced by a

5 thousand

thousand imaginary charms. I resolved forthwith to strike into the country.

The day began now to dawn. It was Sunday, and I was desirous of eluding observation. I was somewhat recruited by rest, though the languors of sleeplessness oppressed me. I meant to throw myself on the first lap of verdure I should meet, and indulge in sleep that I so much wanted. I knew not the direction of the streets, but followed that which I first entered from the court, trusting that, by adhering steadily to one course, I should some time reach the fields. This street, as I afterwards found, led to Schuylkill, and soon extricated me from houses. I could not cross this river without payment of toll:—it was requisite to cross it, in order to reach that part of the country whither I was desirous of going; but how should I effect my passage? I knew of no ford, and the smallest expence exceeded my capacity. Ten thousand guineas and a farthing were equally remote from
nothing.

nothing, and nothing was the portion allotted to me.

While my mind was thus occupied, I turned up one of the streets which tend northward ; it was for some length uninhabited and unpaved. Presently I reached a pavement and a painted fence, along which a row of poplars was planted. It bounded a garden, into which a knot-hole permitted me to pry. The enclosure was a charming green, which I saw belonged to a house of the loftiest and most stately order ; it seemed like a recent erection, had all the gloss of novelty, and exhibited, to my unpractised eyes, the magnificence of palaces. My father's dwelling did not equal the height of one story, and might be easily comprised in one-fourth of those buildings which here were designed to accommodate the menials. My heart dictated the comparison between my own condition and that of the proprietors of this domain. How wide and how impassable was the gulf by which

we

we were separated ! This fair inheritance had fallen to one who, perhaps, would only abuse it to the purposes of luxury, while I, with intentions worthy of the friend of mankind, was doomed to wield the flail and the mattock.

I had been entirely unaccustomed to this train of reflection ; my books had taught me the dignity and safety of the middle path, and my darling writer abounded with encomiums on rural life. At a distance from luxury and pomp, I viewed them, perhaps, in a just light. A nearer scrutiny confirmed my early prepossessions ; but at the distance at which I now stood, the lofty edifices, the splendid furniture, and the copious accommodations of the rich excited my admiration and my envy.

I relinquished my station, and proceeded, in a heartless mood, along the fence. I now came to the mansion itself ; the principal door was entered by a staircase of marble. I had never seen the stone of Carrara, and wildly supposed this to have been dug from
Italian

Italian quarries. The beauty of the poplars, the coolness exhaled from the dew-besprent bricks, the commodiousness of the seat which these steps afforded, and the uncertainty into which I was plunged respecting my future conduct, all combined to make me pause. I sat down on the lower step, and began to meditate.

By some transition it occurred to me that the supply of my most urgent wants might be found in some inhabitant of this house. I needed at present a few cents; and what were a few cents to the tenant of a mansion like this? I had an invincible aversion to the calling of a beggar; but I regarded, with still more antipathy, the vocation of a thief: to this alternative, however, I was now reduced—I must either steal or beg, unless indeed assistance could be procured under the notion of a loan. Would a stranger refuse to lend the pittance that I wanted? Surely not, when the urgency of my wants was explained.

I recollected other obstacles. To summon
the

the master of the house from his bed perhaps, for the sake of such an application, would be preposterous—I should be in more danger of provoking his anger, than exciting his benevolence. This request might surely, with more propriety, be preferred to a passenger—I should probably meet several before I should arrive at Schuylkill.

A servant just then appeared at the door with a bucket and brush ;—this obliged me, much sooner than I intended, to decamp. With some reluctance I rose, and proceeded. This house occupied the corner of the street, and I now turned this corner towards the country. A person at some distance before me was approaching in an opposite direction.

“ Why,” said I, “ may I not make my demand of the first man I meet? This person exhibits tokens of ability to lend—there is nothing chilling or austere in his demeanour.”

The resolution to address this passenger was almost formed, but the nearer he advanced, my resolves grew less firm. He noticed
me

me not till he came within a few paces: he seemed busy in reflection; and had not my figure caught his eye, or had he merely bestowed a passing glance upon me, I should not have been sufficiently courageous to have detained him. The event, however, was widely different.

He looked at me, and started; for an instant, as it were, and till he had time to dart at me a second glance, he checked his pace. This behaviour decided mine, and he stopped on perceiving tokens of a desire to address him. I spoke, but my accents and air sufficiently denoted my embarrassments.

“I am going to solicit a favour, which my situation makes of the highest importance to me, and which I hope it will be easy for you, Sir, to grant. It is not an alms, but a loan that I seek—a loan that I will repay the moment I am able to do it. I am going to the country, but have not wherewith to pay my passage over Schuylkill, or to buy a morsel of bread. May I venture

ture to request of you, Sir, the loan of sixpence? As I told you, it is my intention to repay it."

I delivered this address, not without some faltering, but with great earnestness; I laid particular stress upon my intention to refund the money. He listened with a most inquisitive air—his eye surveyed me from head to foot.

After some pause, he said, in a very emphatic manner—"Why into the country? Have you family—kindred—friends?"

"No," answered I, "I have neither; I go in search of the means of subsistence. I have passed my life upon a farm, and propose to die in the same condition."

"Whence have you come?"

"I came yesterday from the country, with a view to earn my bread in some way; but have changed my plan, and propose now to return."

"Why have you changed it? In what way are you capable of earning your bread?"

"I hardly

"I hardly know," said I; "I can as yet manage no tool that can be managed in the city, but the pen. My habits have, in some small degree, qualified me for a writer; I would willingly accept employment of that kind."

He fixed his eyes upon the earth, and was silent for some minutes. At length recovering himself, he said—"Follow me to my house—perhaps something may be done for you; if not, I will lend you sixpence."

It may be supposed that I eagerly complied with the invitation. My companion said no more, his air bespeaking him to be absorbed by his own thoughts, till he reached his house, which proved to be that at the door of which I had been seated. We entered a parlour together.

Unless you can assume my ignorance and my simplicity, you will be unable to conceive the impressions that were made by the size and ornaments of this apartment. I shall omit these impressions, which, indeed, no descriptions could adequately convey, and dwell

dwell on incidents of greater moment. He asked me to give him a specimen of my penmanship. I told you that I had bestowed very great attention upon this art. Implements were brought, and I sat down to the task. By some inexplicable connection, a line in Shakespeare occurred to me, and I wrote,

“My poverty, but not my will consents.”

The sentiment conveyed in this line powerfully affected him, but in a way which I could not then comprehend. I collected from subsequent events that the inference was not unfavourable to my understanding or my morals. He questioned me as to my history. I related my origin, and my inducements to desert my father's house. With respect to last night's adventures I was silent; I saw no useful purpose that could be answered by disclosure, and I half suspected that my companion would refuse credit to my tale.

There were frequent intervals of abstraction and reflection between his questions.

My examination lasted not much less than an hour. At length he said—"I want an amanuensis or copyist—on what terms will you live with me?"

I answered that I knew not how to estimate the value of my services—I knew not whether these services were agreeable or healthful. My life had hitherto been active; my constitution was predisposed to diseases of the lungs, and the change might be hurtful. I was willing, however, to try, and to content myself for a month or a year with so much as would furnish me with food, clothing, and lodging.

"'Tis well," said he; "you remain with me as long, and no longer than both of us please. You shall lodge and eat in this house; I will supply you with clothing, and your task will be to write what I dictate. Your person, I see, has not shared much of your attention; it is in my power to equip you instantly in the manner which becomes a resident in this house. Come with me."

He led the way into the court behind,
and

and thence into a neat building, which contained large wooden vessels and a pump.

“There, said he, “you may wash yourself; and when that is done, I will conduct you to your chamber and your wardrobe.”

This was speedily performed, and he accordingly led the way to the chamber. It was an apartment in the third story, finished and furnished in the same costly and superb style with the rest of the house. He opened closets and drawers which overflowed with clothes and linen of all and of the best kinds.

“These are your’s,” said he, “as long as you stay with me; dress yourself as you like best—here is every thing your nakedness requires. When dressed, you may descend to breakfast.”

With these words he left me.

The clothes were all in the French style, as I afterwards, by comparing my garb with that of others, discovered;—they were fitted to my shape with the nicest precision. I bedecked myself with all my care—I remem-

bered the style of dress used by my beloved Clavering. My locks were of shining auburn, flowing and smooth like his. Having wrung the wet from them, and combed, I tied them carelessly in a black ribbon. Thus equipped, I surveyed myself in a mirror.

You may imagine, if you can, the sensations which this instantaneous transformation produced. Appearances are wonderfully influenced by dress. A check shirt buttoned at the neck, an awkward fustian coat, check trousers, and bare feet were now supplanted by linen and muslin, nankeen coat striped with green, a white silk waistcoat elegantly needle-wrought, kerseymere pantaloons, stockings of variegated silk, and shoes that, in their softness, pliancy, and polished surface, vied with satin. I could scarcely forbear looking back to see whether the image in the glass, so well proportioned, so gallant, and so graceful, did not belong to another; I could scarcely recognise any lineaments of my own. I walked to the window.—“An hour ago,” said I,
“I was

"I was traversing that path a barefoot beggar—now I am thus!"

Again I surveyed myself.—"Surely some insanity has fastened on my understanding—my senses are the sport of dreams; some magic that disdains the cumbrousness of nature's progress has wrought this change!"

I was roused from these doubts by a summons to breakfast, obsequiously delivered by a black servant.

V. I found Welbeck (for I shall henceforth call him by his true name) at the breakfast table. A superb equipage of silver and China was before him. He was startled at my entrance:—the change in my dress seemed for a moment to have deceived him—his eye was frequently fixed upon me with unusual steadfastness. At these times there was inquietude and wonder in his features.

I had now an opportunity of examining my host. There was nicety, but no ornament in his dress. His form was of the middle height, spare, but vigorous and graceful. His face was cast, I thought, in a foreign mould.

mould. His forehead receded beyond the usual degree in visages which I had seen. His eyes large and prominent, but imparting no marks of benignity and habitual joy. The rest of his face forcibly suggested the idea of a convex edge. His whole figure impressed me with emotions of veneration and awe; a gravity that almost amounted to sadness invariably attended him when we were alone together.

He whispered the servant that waited, who immediately retired. He then said, turning to me—"A lady will enter presently, whom you are to treat with the respect due to my daughter. You must not notice any emotion she may betray at the sight of you, nor expect her to converse with you; for she does not understand your language."

He had scarcely spoken, when she entered. I was seized with certain misgivings and flutterings which a clownish education may account for. I so far conquered my timidity, however, as to snatch a look at her. I was not born to execute her portrait. Perhaps
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the turban that wreathed her head—the brilliant texture and inimitable folds of her drapery, and nymphlike port, more than the essential attributes of her person, gave splendour to the celestial vision ; perhaps it was her snowy hues and the cast rather than the position of her features that were so prolific of enchantment ; or perhaps the wonder originated only in my own ignorance.

She did not immediately notice me. When she did, she almost shrieked with surprise. She held up her hands, and gazing upon me, uttered various exclamations which I could not understand. I could only remark that her accents were thrillingly musical. Her perturbations refused to be stilled ;—it was with difficulty that she withdrew her regards from me. Much conversation passed between her and Welbeck, but I could comprehend no part of it. I was at liberty to animadvert on the visible part of their intercourse. I diverted some part of my attention from my

own embarrassments, and fixed it on their looks.

In this art, as in most others, I was an unpractised simpleton. In the countenance of Welbeck there was somewhat else than sympathy with the astonishment and distress of the lady; but I could not interpret these additional tokens. When her attention was engrossed by Welbeck, her eyes were frequently vagrant or downcast, her cheeks contracted a deeper hue, and her breathing was almost prolonged into a sigh. These were marks on which I made no comments at the time; my own situation was calculated to breed confusion in my thoughts, and awkwardness in my gestures.

Breakfast being finished, the lady, apparently at the request of Welbeck, sat down to a piano-forte.

Here again I must be silent. I was not wholly destitute of musical practice and musical taste; I had that degree of knowledge which enabled me to estimate the
transcendent

transcendent skill of this performer. As if the pathos of her touch were insufficient, I found after some time that the lawless jarrings of the keys were chastened by her own more liquid notes. She played without a book; and though her bass might be preconcerted, it was plain that her right-hand notes were momentary and spontaneous inspirations. Meanwhile, Welbeck stood leaning his arms on the back of a chair near her, with his eyes fixed on her face. His features were fraught with a meaning which I was eager to interpret, but unable.

I have read of transitions effected by magic—I have read of palaces and deserts which were subject to the dominion of spells. Poets may sport with their power, but I am certain that no transition was ever conceived more marvellous, and more beyond the reach of foresight, than that which I had just experienced. Heaths, vexed by a midnight storm, may be changed into a hall of choral nymphs and regal banquetting; forest

forest glades may give sudden place to colonnades and Carnivals ; but he whose senses are deluded, finds himself still on his natal earth. These miracles are contemptible when compared with that which placed me under this roof, and gave me to partake in this audience. I know that my emotions are in danger of being regarded as ludicrous by those who cannot figure to themselves the consequences of a limited and rustic education.

CHAP. VI.

NEW SCENES.

IN a short time the lady retired. I naturally expected that some comments would be made on her behaviour, and that the cause of her surprise and distress on seeing me would be explained; but Welbeck said nothing on that subject. When she was gone, he went to the window, and stood for some time occupied, as it seemed, with his own thoughts; then he turned to me, and calling me by my name, desired me to accompany him up stairs. There was neither cheerfulness nor mildness in his address, but

neither was there any thing domineering or arrogant.

We entered an apartment on the same floor with my chamber, but separated from it by a spacious entry. It was supplied with bureaux, cabinets, and bookcases.

“This,” said he, “is your room and mine; but we must enter it, and leave it together. I mean to act not as your master, but your friend. My maimed hand,”—so saying, he shewed me his right hand, the forefinger of which was wanting, “will not allow me to write accurately or copiously; for this reason I have required your aid in a work of some moment. Much haste will not be requisite; and as to the hours and duration of employment, these will be seasonable and short.

“Your present situation is new to you, and we will therefore defer entering on our business;—meanwhile, you may amuse yourself in what manner you please. Consider this house as your home, and make yourself familiar with it. Stay within or go out, be
busy

busy or be idle, as your fancy shall prompt; only you will conform to our domestic system as to eating and sleep—the servants will inform you of this. Next week we will enter on the task for which I design you. You may now withdraw.”

I obeyed this mandate with some awkwardness and hesitation. I went into my own chamber, not displeased with an opportunity of loneliness. I threw myself on a chair, and resigned myself to those thoughts which would naturally arise in this situation. I speculated on the character and views of Welbeck. I saw that he was embosomed in tranquillity and grandeur; riches, therefore, were his—but in what did his opulence consist, and whence did it arise? What were the limits by which it was confined, and what its degree of permanence? I was unhabituated to ideas of floating or transferrable wealth:—the rent of houses and lands was the only species of property which was as yet perfectly intelligible. My previous ideas led me to regard Welbeck as the proprietor of

this dwelling, and of numerous houses and farms. By the same cause I was fain to suppose him enriched by inheritance, and that his life had been uniform.

I next adverted to his social condition. This mansion appeared to have but two inhabitants besides servants. Who was the nymph who had hovered for a moment in my sight? Had he not called her his daughter? The apparent difference in their ages would justify this relation; but her guise, her features, and her accents were foreign—her language I suspected strongly to be that of Italy. How should he be the father of an Italian? But were there not some foreign lineaments in his countenance?

This idea seemed to open a new world to my view. I had gained from my books confused ideas of European governments and manners. I knew that the present was a period of revolution and hostility; might not these be illustrious fugitives from Provence or the Milanese? Their portable wealth, which may reasonably be supposed to be great, they
have

have transported hither. Thus may be explained the sorrow that veils their countenance ; the loss of estates and honours—the untimely death of kindred, and perhaps of his wife, may furnish eternal food for regrets. Welbeck's utterance, though rapid and distinct, partook, as I conceived, in some very slight degree of a foreign idiom.

Such was the dream that haunted my undisciplined and unenlightened imagination ; the more I revolved it, the more plausible it seemed. On this supposition every appearance that I had witnessed was easily solved, unless it were their treatment of me. This at first was a source of hopeless perplexity ;—gradually, however, a clue seemed to be afforded. Welbeck had betrayed astonishment on my first appearance :—the lady's wonder was mingled with distress. Perhaps they discovered a remarkable resemblance between me and one who stood in the relation of son to Welbeck, and of brother to the lady. This youth might have perished on the scaffold or in war. These, no doubt, were his

his clothes. This chamber might have been reserved for him, but his death left it to be appropriated to another.

I had hitherto been unable to guess at the reason why all this kindness had been lavished on me. Will not this conjecture sufficiently account for it? No wonder that this resemblance was enhanced by assuming his dress.

Taking all circumstances into view, these ideas were not, perhaps, destitute of probability. Appearances naturally suggested them to me; they were also powerfully enforced by inclination. They threw me into transports of wonder and hope. When I dwelt upon the incidents of my past life, and traced the chain of events from the death of my mother to the present moment, I almost acquiesced in the notion that some beneficent and ruling genius had prepared my path for me. Events which, when foreseen, would most ardently have been deprecated, and when they happened, were accounted in the highest degree luckless, were now seen to be propitious.

Hence

Hence I inferred the infatuation of despair, and the folly of precipitate conclusions.

But what was the fate reserved for me? Perhaps Welbeck would adopt me for his own son. Wealth has ever been capriciously distributed; the mere physical relation of birth is all that entitles us to manors and thrones: identity itself frequently depends upon a casual likeness, or an old nurse's imposture. Nations have risen in arms, as in the case of the Stewarts, in the cause of one, the genuineness of whose birth has been denied, and can never be proved; but if the cause be trivial and fallacious, the effects are momentous and solid; it ascertains our portion of felicity and usefulness, and fixes our lot among peasants or Princes.

Something may depend upon my own deportment. Will it not behove me to cultivate all my virtues, and eradicate all my defects? I see that the abilities of this man are venerable. Perhaps he will not lightly or hastily decide in my favour—he will be governed by the proofs that I shall give of discernment.

discernment and integrity. I had always been exempt from temptation, and was therefore undepraved; but this view of things had a wonderful tendency to invigorate my virtuous resolutions—all within me was exhilaration and joy.

There was but one thing wanting to exalt me to a dizzy height, and give me place among the stars of heaven. My resemblance to her brother had forcibly affected this lady; but I was not her brother—I was raised to a level with her, and made a tenant of the same mansion. Some intercourse would take place between us; time would lay level impediments, and establish familiarity, and this intercourse might foster love, and terminate in—*marriage!*

These images were of a nature too glowing and expansive to allow me to be longer inactive. I sallied forth into the open air. This tumult of delicious thoughts in some time subsided, and gave way to images relative to my present situation. My curiosity was awake;—as yet I had seen little of the city,
and

and this opportunity for observation was not to be neglected. I therefore coursed through several streets, attentively examining the objects that successively presented themselves.

At length it occurred to me to search out the house in which I had lately been immured. I was not without hopes that at some future period I should be able to comprehend the allusions, and brighten the obscurities that hung about the dialogue of last night.

The house was easily discovered. I reconnoitred the court and gate through which I had passed. The mansion was of the first order in magnitude and decoration. This was not the bound of my present discovery; for I was gifted with that confidence which would make me set on foot enquiries in the neighbourhood. I looked around for a suitable medium of intelligence. The opposite and adjoining houses were small, and apparently occupied by persons of an indigent class. At one of these was a sign, denoting

denoting it to be the residence of a tailor. Seated on a bench at the door was a young man with coarse uncombed locks, breeches-knees unbuttoned, stockings ungartered, shoes slipshod and unbuckled, and a face unwashed, gazing stupidly from hollow eyes. His aspect was embellished with good-nature, though indicative of ignorance.

This was the only person in sight. He might be able to say something concerning his opulent neighbour;—to him, therefore, I resolved to apply. I went up to him, and pointing to the house in question, asked him who lived there.

He answered, “ Mr. Matthews.”

“ What is his profession—his way of life ?”

“ A gentleman. He does nothing but walk about.”

“ How long has he been married ?”

“ Married ! He is not married as I know on. He never has been married : he is a bachelor.”

This intelligence was unexpected. It made
me

me pause to reflect whether I had not mistaken the house. This, however, seemed impossible. I renewed my questions.

“ A bachelor, say you? Are you not mistaken?”

“ No: it would be an odd thing if he was married. An old fellow, with one foot in the grave—comical enough for him to *git a wife!*”

“ An old man? Does he live alone? What is his family?”

“ No; he does not live alone: he has a niece that lives with him. She is married, and her husband lives there too.”

“ What is his name?”

“ I don't know. I never heard it as I know on.”

“ What is his trade?”

“ He's a marchant: he keeps a store some where or other, but I don't know where.”

“ How long has he been married?”

“ About two years. They lost a child lately. The young woman was in a huge taking about it. They says she was quite
crazy

crazy some days for the death of the child : and she is not quite out of the *dumps* yet. To be sure, the child was a sweet little thing ; but they need not make such a rout about it. I'll warn they'll have enough of them before they die."

"What is the character of the young man ? Where was he born and educated ? Has he parents or brothers ?"

My companion was incapable of answering these questions, and I left him with little essential addition to the knowledge I already possessed.

CHAP. VII.

CURIOSITY.

AFTER viewing various parts of the city, intruding into Churches, and diving into alleys, I returned. The rest of the day I spent chiefly in my chamber, reflecting on my new condition, surveying my apartment, its presses and closets, and conjecturing the causes of appearances.

At dinner and supper I was alone. Venturing to enquire of the servant where his master and mistress were, I was answered that they were engaged. I did not question him

him as to the nature of their engagement, though it was a fertile source of curiosity.

Next morning, at breakfast, I again met Welbeck and the lady. The incidents were nearly those of the preceding morning, if it were not that the lady exhibited tokens of somewhat greater uneasiness. When she left us, Welbeck sunk into apparent meditation. I was at a loss whether to retire, or remain where I was. At last, however, I was on the point of leaving the room, when he broke silence, and began a conversation with me.

He put questions to me, the obvious scope of which was to know my sentiments on moral topics. I had no motives to conceal my opinions, and therefore delivered them with frankness. At length he introduced allusions to my own history, and made more particular enquiries on that head. Here I was not equally frank; yet I did not feign any thing, but merely dealt in generals. I had acquired notions of propriety on this head, perhaps somewhat fastidious. Minute details
respecting

respecting our own concerns are apt to weary all but the narrator himself. I said thus much, and the truth of my remark was eagerly assented to.

With some marks of hesitation, and after various preliminaries, my companion hinted that my own interest, as well as his, enjoined upon me silence to all but himself, on the subject of my birth and early adventures. It was not likely that, while in his service, my circle of acquaintance would be large, or my intercourse with the world frequent; but in my communication with others, he requested me to speak rather of others than of myself. This request, he said, might appear singular to me; but he had his reasons for making it, which it was not necessary at present to disclose: though when I should know them, I should readily acknowledge their validity.

I scarcely knew what answer to make. I was willing to oblige him. I was far from expecting that any exigence would occur, making disclosure my duty. The employ-

ment was productive of pain more than of pleasure; and the curiosity that would uselessly seek a knowledge of my past life, was no less impertinent than the loquacity that would uselessly communicate that knowledge. I readily promised, therefore, to adhere to his advice.

This assurance afforded him evident satisfaction; yet it did not seem to amount to quite as much as he wished. He repeated, in stronger terms, the necessity there was for caution. He was far from suspecting me to possess an impertinent and talkative disposition, or that in my eagerness to expatiate on my own concerns, I should overstep the limits of politeness. But this was not enough: I was to govern myself by a persuasion that the interests of my friend and myself would be materially affected by my conduct.

Perhaps I ought to have allowed these insinuations to breed suspicion in my mind; but, conscious as I was of the benefits which I had received from this man, prone, from
my

my inexperience, to rely upon professions, and confide in appearances, and unaware that I could be placed in any condition in which mere silence respecting myself could be injurious or criminal, I made no scruple to promise compliance with his wishes. Nay, I went farther than this—I desired to be accurately informed as to what it was proper to conceal. He answered that my silence might extend to every thing anterior to my arrival in the city, and my being incorporated with his family. Here our conversation ended, and I retired to ruminate on what had passed.

I derived little satisfaction from my reflections. I began now to perceive inconveniences that might arise from this precipitate promise. Whatever should happen in consequence of my being immured in the chamber, and of the loss of my clothes and of the portrait of my friend, I had bound myself to silence. These inquietudes, however, were transient. I trusted that these events would operate auspiciously; but my curiosity was now

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awakened

awakened as to the motives which Welbeck could have for exacting from me this concealment. To act under the guidance of another, and to wander in the dark, ignorant whither my path tended, and what effects might flow from my agency, was a new and irksome situation.

From these thoughts I was recalled by a message from Welbeck. He gave me a folded paper, which he requested me to carry to No. — South Fourth Street.—“ Enquire,” said he, “ for Mrs. Wentworth, in order merely to ascertain the house, for you need not ask to see her :—merely give the letter to the servant, and retire. Excuse me for imposing this service upon you : it is of too great moment to be trusted to a common messenger. I usually perform it myself, but am at present otherwise engaged.”

I took the letter, and set out to deliver it. This was a trifling circumstance, yet my mind was full of reflections on the consequences that might flow from it. I remembered the directions that were given,
but

but construed them in a manner different, perhaps, from Welbeck's expectations or wishes. He had charged me to leave the billet with the servant who happened to answer my summons; but had he not said that the message was important, inasmuch that it could not be entrusted to common hands? He had permitted, rather than enjoined me, to dispense with seeing the lady; and this permission I conceived to be dictated merely by regard to my convenience. It was incumbent on me, therefore, to take some pains to deliver the letter into her own hands.

I arrived at the house, and knocked. A female servant appeared. Her mistress was up stairs. She would tell her if I wished to see her; and meanwhile invited me to enter the parlour. I did so; and the girl retired to inform her mistress that one waited for her. I ought to mention that my departure from the directions which I had received, was, in some degree, owing to an inquisitive temper. I was eager after knowledge, and

was disposed to profit by every opportunity to survey the interior of dwellings, and converse with their inhabitants.

I scanned the walls, the furniture, the pictures. Over the fire-place was a portrait in oil of a female—she was elderly and matronlike: perhaps she was the mistress of this habitation, and the person to whom I should be immediately introduced. Was it a casual suggestion, or was there an actual resemblance between the strokes of the pencil which executed this portrait, and that of Clavering? However that might be, the sight of this picture revived the memory of my friend, and called up a suspicion that this was the production of his skill.

I was busily revolving this idea, when the lady herself entered. It was the same whose portrait I had been examining.—She fixed scrutinizing and powerful eyes upon me. She looked at the superscription of the letter which I presented, and immediately resumed her examination of me. I was somewhat abashed by the closeness of her observation, and

and gave tokens of this state of mind, which did not pass unobserved. They seemed instantly to remind her that she behaved with too little regard to civility. She recovered herself, and began to peruse the letter. Having done this, her attention was once more fixed upon me:—she was evidently desirous of entering into conversation, but seemed at a loss in what manner to begin. This situation was new to me, and was productive of no small embarrassment. I was preparing to take my leave, when she spoke, though not without considerable hesitation.

“ This letter is from Mr. Welbeck ? You are his friend, I presume—perhaps a relation ? ”

I was conscious that I had no claim to either of these titles, and that I was no more than his servant. My pride would not allow me to acknowledge this, and I merely said—

“ I live with him at present, Madam. ”

I imagined that this answer did not perfectly satisfy her ; yet she received it with a certain air of acquiescence. She was silent for a few minutes, and then rising, said—

“Excuse me, Sir, for a few minutes. I will write a few words to Mr. Welbeck.” So saying, she withdrew.

I returned to the contemplation of the picture. From this, however, my attention was quickly diverted by a paper that lay on the mantle-piece. A single glance was sufficient to put my blood into motion. I started, and laid my hand upon the well-known packet. It was that which enclosed the portrait of Clavering!

I unfolded, and examined it with eagerness. By what miracle came it hither? It was found, together with my bundle, two nights before. I had despaired of ever seeing it again; and yet here was the same portrait enclosed in the self-same paper! I have forbore to dwell upon the regret amounting to grief with which I was affected, in consequence of the loss of this precious relic. My joy on thus speedily and unexpectedly regaining it, is not easily described.

For a time I did not reflect that to hold it thus in my hand, was not sufficient to entitle
me

me to repossession. I must acquaint this lady with the history of this picture, and convince her of my ownership. But how was this to be done? Was she connected in any way by friendship or by consanguinity with that unfortunate youth? If she were, some information as to his destiny would be anxiously sought. I did not just then perceive any impropriety in imparting it. If it came into her hands by accident, still it will be necessary to relate the mode in which it was lost, in order to prove my title to it.

I now heard her descending footsteps, and hastily replaced the picture on the mantle-piece. She entered, and presenting me a letter, desired me to deliver it to Mr. Welbeck. I had no pretext for deferring my departure, but was unwilling to go without obtaining possession of the portrait. An interval of silence and irresolution succeeded. I cast significant glances at the spot where it lay, and at length mustered up my strength of mind, and pointing to the paper—

“Madam,” said I, “*there* is something which I recognise to be mine. I know not how it came into your possession, but so lately as the day before yesterday it was in mine. I lost it by a strange accident; and as I deem it of inestimable value, I hope you will have no objection to restore it.”

During this speech the lady’s countenance exhibited marks of the utmost perturbation.

“Your picture!” she exclaimed; “you lost it!—How?—Where?—Did you know that person? What has become of him?”

“I knew him well,” said I. “That picture was executed by himself. He gave it to me with his own hands; and till the moment I unfortunately lost it, it was my dear and perpetual companion.”

“Good Heaven!” she exclaimed with increasing vehemence, “where did you meet with him? What is become of him? Is he dead or alive?”

These appearances sufficiently shewed me that Clavering and this lady were connected
by

by some ties of tenderness. I answered that he was dead; that my mother and myself were his attendants and nurses, and that this portrait was his legacy to me.

This intelligence melted her into tears; and it was some time before she recovered strength enough to resume the conversation. She then enquired when and where it was that he died?—"How did you lose this portrait? It was found wrapped in some coarse clothes, lying in a stall in the market-house on Saturday evening. Two negro women, servants of one of my friends, strolling through the market, found it, and brought it to their mistress, who, recognising the portrait, sent it to me. To whom did that bundle belong? Was it your's?"

These questions reminded me of the painful predicament in which I now stood. I had promised Welbeck to conceal from every one my former condition; but to explain in what manner this bundle was lost, and how my intercourse with Clavering had taken place, was to violate this promise. It

was possible, perhaps, to escape the confession of the truth by equivocation. Falsehoods were easily invented, and might lead her far away from my true condition; but I was wholly unused to equivocation—never yet had a lie polluted my lips. I was not weak enough to be ashamed of my origin. This lady had an interest in the fate of Clavering, and might justly claim all the information which I was able to impart; yet to forget the compact which I had so lately made, and an adherence to which might possibly be in the highest degree beneficial to me and to Welbeck, I was willing to adhere to it, provided falsehood could be avoided.

These thoughts rendered me silent. The pain of my embarrassment amounted almost to agony. I felt the keenest regret at my own precipitation in claiming the picture: its value to me was altogether imaginary. The affection which this lady had borne the original, whatever was the source of that affection, would prompt her to cherish the
copy;

copy; and, however precious it was in my eyes, I should cheerfully resign it to her.

In the confusion of my thoughts, an expedient suggested itself sufficiently inartificial and bold.—“It is true, Madam, what I have said: I saw him breathe his last! This is his only legacy. If you wish it, I willingly resign it; but this is all that I can now disclose. I am placed in circumstances which render it improper to say more.”

These words were uttered not very distinctly; and the lady's vehemence hindered her from noticing them. She again repeated her interrogations, to which I returned the same answer.

At first she expressed the utmost surprise at my conduct. From this she descended to some degree of asperity. She made rapid allusions to the history of Clavering. He was the son of the gentleman who owned the house in which Welbeck resided. He was the object of immeasurable fondness and indulgence. He had sought permission to travel; and this being refused by the
absurd

absurd timidity of his parents, he had twice been frustrated in attempting to embark for Europe clandestinely. They ascribed his disappearance to a third and successful attempt of this kind, and had exercised anxious and unwearied diligence in endeavouring to trace his footsteps. All their efforts had failed. One motive for their returning to Europe, was the hope of discovering some traces of him, as they entertained no doubt of his having crossed the ocean. The vehemence of Mrs. Wentworth's curiosity as to those particulars of his life and death, may be easily conceived. My refusal only heightened this passion.

Finding me refractory to all her efforts, she at length dismissed me in anger.

CHAP. VIII.

SURPRISE AND ANXIETY.

THIS extraordinary interview was now passed. Pleasure as well as pain attended my reflections on it. I adhered to the promise I had improvidently given to Welbeck, but had excited displeasure, and perhaps suspicion in the lady. She would find it hard to account for my silence. She would probably impute it to perverseness, or imagine it to flow from some incident connected with the death of Clavering, calculated to give a new edge to her curiosity.

It

It was plain that some connection subsisted between her and Welbeck. Would she drop the subject at the point which it had now attained? Would she cease to exert herself to extract from me the desired information? or would she not rather make Welbeck a party in the cause, and prejudice my new friend against me? This was an evil proper by all lawful means to avoid. I knew of no other expedient than to confess to him the truth with regard to Clavering, and explain to him the dilemma in which my adherence to my promise had involved me.

I found him on my return home, and delivered him the letter with which I was charged. At the sight of it surprise, mingled with some uneasiness, appeared in his looks.

“What!” said he, in a tone of disappointment, “you then saw the lady?”

I now remembered his directions to leave my message at the door, and apologized for my neglecting them by telling my reasons. His chagrin vanished, but not without an
apparent

apparent effort, and he said that all was well:—the affair was of no moment.

After a pause of preparation, I entreated his attention to something which I had to relate. I then detailed the history of Clavering, and of my late embarrassments. As I went on, his countenance betokened increasing solicitude: his emotion was particularly strong when I came to the interrogatories of Mrs. Wentworth in relation to Clavering; but this emotion gave way to profound surprise when I related the manner in which I had eluded her enquiries. I concluded with observing that, when I promised forbearance on the subject of my own adventures, I had not foreseen any exigence which would make an adherence to my promise difficult or inconvenient; that, if his interest was promoted by my silence, I was still willing to maintain it, and requested his directions how to conduct myself on this occasion.

He appeared to ponder deeply, and with much perplexity on what I had said. When
he

he spoke, there was hesitation in his manner, and circuitry in his expressions, that proved him to have something in his thoughts which he knew not how to communicate. He frequently paused; but my answers and remarks occasionally given, appeared to deter him from the revelation of his purpose. Our discourse ended for the present, by his desiring me to persist in my present plan. I should suffer no inconveniences from it, since it would be my own fault if an interview again took place between the lady and myself: meanwhile he should see her, and effectually silence her enquiries.

I ruminated not superficially or briefly on this dialogue. By what means would he silence her enquiries? He surely meant not to mislead her by fallacious representations? Some inquietude now crept into my thoughts. I began to form conjectures as to the nature of the scheme, to which my suppression of the truth was to be thus made subservient. It seemed as if I were walking in the dark,
and

and might rush into snares, or drop into pits before I was aware of my danger. Each moment accumulated my doubts, and I cherished a secret foreboding that the event would prove my new situation to be far less fortunate than I had at first fondly believed. The question now occurred with painful repetition—who and what was Welbeck? What was his relation to this foreign lady? What was the service for which I was to be employed?

I could not be contented without a solution of these mysteries. Why should I not lay my soul open before my new friend? Considering my situation, would he regard my fears and my surmises as criminal? I felt that they originated in laudable habits and views; my peace of mind depended on the favourable verdict which conscience should pass on my proceedings; I saw the emptiness of fame and luxury when put in the balance against the recompence of virtue. Never would I purchase the blandishments
of

of adulation and the glare of opulence at the price of my honesty.

Amidst these reflections the dinner hour arrived. The lady and Welbeck were present. A new train of sentiments now occupied my mind. I regarded them both with inquisitive eyes. I cannot well account for the revolution which had taken place in my mind ; perhaps it was a proof of the capriciousness of my temper, or it was merely the fruit of my profound ignorance of life and manners. Whenever it arose, certain it is that I contemplated the scene before me with altered eyes ; its order and pomp were no longer the parents of tranquillity and awe. My wild reveries of inheriting this splendour, and appropriating the affections of this nymph, I now regarded as lunatic hope and childish folly ; education and nature had qualified me for a different scene. This might be the mask of misery, and the structure of vice.

My companions, as well as myself, were
silent

silent during the meal. The lady retired as soon as it was finished. My inexplicable melancholy increased—it did not pass unnoticed by Welbeck, who enquired with an air of kindness into the cause of my visible dejection. I am almost ashamed to relate to what extremes my folly transported me;—instead of answering him, I was weak enough to shed tears.

This excited afresh his surprise and his sympathy. He renewed his enquiries. My heart was full, but how to disburthen it I knew not. At length, with some difficulty, I expressed my wishes to leave his house, and return into the country.

What, he asked, had occurred to suggest this new plan? What motive could incite me to bury myself in rustic obscurity? How did I purpose to dispose of myself? Had some new friend sprung up more able or more willing to benefit me than he had been?

“No,” I answered, “I have no relation who would own me, or friend who would
6 protect

protect me. If I went into the country, it would be to the toilsome occupations of a day-labourer ; but even that was better than my present situation."

" This opinion," he observed, " must be newly formed. What is there irksome or offensive in your present mode of life ?

That this man condescended to expostulate with me, to dissuade me from my new plan, and to enumerate the benefits which he was willing to confer, penetrated my heart with gratitude. I could not but acknowledge that leisure and literature, copious and elegant accommodation were valuable for their own sake—that all the delights of sensation, and refinements of intelligence were comprised within my present sphere, and would be nearly wanting in that to which I was going ; I felt temporary compunction for my folly, and determined to adopt a different deportment. I could not prevail upon myself to unfold the true cause of my dejection, and permitted him, therefore, to ascribe it to a kind of home-sickness, to
inexperience,

Inexperience, and to that ignorance which, on being ushered into a new scene, is oppressed with a sensation of forlornness. He remarked that these chimeras would vanish before the influence of time, and company, and occupation. On the next week he would furnish me with employment ; meanwhile, he would introduce me into company, where intelligence and vivacity would combine to dispel my gloom.

As soon as we separated, my inquietudes returned. I contended with them in vain, and finally resolved to abandon my present situation. When and how this purpose was to be effected I knew not—that was to be the theme of future deliberation.

Evening having arrived, Welbeck proposed to me to accompany him on a visit to one of his friends. I cheerfully accepted the invitation, and went with him to your friend, Mr. Wortley's. A numerous party was assembled, chiefly of the female sex. I was introduced by Welbeck by the title of *a young friend of his*. Notwithstanding my embarrassment,

embarrassment, I did not fail to attend to what passed on this occasion. I remarked that the utmost deference was paid to my companion, on whom his entrance into this company appeared to operate like magic. His eyes sparkled, his features expanded into a benign serenity, and his wonted reserve gave place to a torrent-like and overflowing elocution.

I marked this change in his deportment with the utmost astonishment. So great was it, that I could hardly persuade myself that it was the same person. A mind thus susceptible of new impressions, must be, I conceived, of a wonderful texture. Nothing was further from my expectations than that this vivacity was mere dissimulation, and would take its leave of him when he left the company; yet this I found to be the case. The door was no sooner closed after him, than his accustomed solemnity returned; he spake little, and that little was delivered with emphatical and monosyllabic brevity.

We returned home at a late hour, and I
immediately

immediately retired to my chamber, not so much from the desire of repose, as in order to enjoy and pursue my own reflections without interruption.

The condition of my mind was considerably remote from happiness. I was placed in a scene that furnished fuel to my curiosity. This passion is a source of pleasure, provided its gratification be practicable. I had no reason, in my present circumstances, to despair of knowledge, yet suspicion and anxiety beset me. I thought upon the delay and toil which the removal of my ignorance would cost, and reaped only pain and fear from the reflection.

The air was remarkably sultry. Lifted shades and lofty ceilings were insufficient to attemper it. The perturbation of my thoughts affected my body, and the heat which oppressed me was aggravated, by my restlessness, almost into fever. Some hours were thus painfully passed, when I recollected that the bath, erected in the court below, contained a

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sufficient antidote to the scorching influence of the atmosphere.

I rose, and descended the stairs softly, that I might not alarm Welbeck and the lady, who occupied the two rooms on the second floor. I proceeded to the bath; and filling the reservoir with water, speedily dissipated the heat that incommoded me. Of all species of sensual gratification, that was the most delicious; and I continued for a long time laving my limbs, and moistening my hair. In the midst of this amusement, I noticed the approach of day, and immediately saw the propriety of returning to my chamber. I returned with the same caution which I had used in descending. My feet were bare, so that it was easy to proceed, unattended by the smallest signal of my progress.

I had reached the carpetted staircase, and was slowly ascending, when I heard, within the chamber that was occupied by the lady, a noise as of some one moving. Though not conscious of having acted improperly, yet

yet I felt reluctance to be seen. There was no reason to suppose that this found was connected with the detection of me in this situation ; yet I acted as if this reason existed, and made haste to pass the door, and gain the second flight of stairs.

I was unable to accomplish my design, when the chamber-door slowly opened, and Welbeck, with a light in his hand, came out. I was abashed and disconcerted at this interview. He started at seeing me ; but discovering in an instant who it was, his face assumed an expression in which shame and anger were powerfully blended. He seemed on the point of opening his mouth to rebuke me ; but suddenly checking himself, he said, in a tone of mildness—" How is this ? Whence come you ? "

His emotion seemed to communicate itself, with an electrical rapidity, to my heart. My tongue faltered while I made some answer. I said—" I have been seeking relief from the heat of the weather in the bath. "

He heard my explanation in silence ; and

after a moment's pause, passed into his own room, and shut himself in. I hastened to my chamber.

A different observer might have found in these circumstances no food for his suspicion or his wonder ; to me, however, they suggested vague and tumultuous ideas.

As I strode across the room, I repeated—
“ This woman is his daughter. What proof have I of that ? He once asserted it, and has frequently uttered allusions and hints, from which no other inference could be drawn. The chamber from which he came, in an hour devoted to sleep, was her's. For what end could a visit like this be paid ? A parent may visit his child at all seasons without a crime. On seeing me, methought his features indicated more than surprise. A keen interpreter would be apt to suspect a consciousness of wrong. What if this woman be not his child ! How shall their relationship be ascertained ? ”

I was summoned at the customary hour to breakfast. My mind was full of ideas connected

netted with this incident. I was not endowed with sufficient firmness to propose the cool and systematic observation of this man's deportment. I felt as if the state of my mind could not but be evident to him, and experienced in myself all the confusion which this discovery was calculated to produce in him. I would have willingly excused myself from meeting him, but that was impossible.

At breakfast, after the usual salutations, nothing was said. For a time I scarcely lifted my eyes from the table. Stealing a glance at Welbeck, I discovered in his features nothing but his wonted gravity. He appeared occupied with thoughts that had no relation to last night's adventure. This encouraged me, and I gradually recovered my composure. Their inattention to me allowed me occasionally to throw scrutinizing and comparing glances at the face of each.

The relationship of parent and child is commonly discoverable in the visage; but the child may resemble either of its parents, yet have no feature in common with both.

Here outlines, surfaces, and hues were in absolute contrariety. That kindred subsisted between them was possible, notwithstanding this dissimilitude; but this circumstance contributed to envenom my suspicions.

Breakfast being finished, Welbeck cast an eye of invitation to the piano-forte. The lady rose to comply with his request. My eye chanced to be at that moment fixed on her. In stepping to the instrument, some motion or appearance awakened a thought in my mind, which affected my feelings like the shock of an earthquake.

I have too slight an acquaintance with the history of the passions to truly explain the emotion which now throbbed in my veins. I had been a stranger to what is called love. From subsequent reflection I have contracted a suspicion that the sentiment with which I regarded this lady was not untinged from this source, and that hence arose the turbulence of my feelings on observing what I construed into marks of pregnancy. The
evidence

evidence afforded me was slight, yet it exercised an absolute sway over my belief.

It was well that this suspicion had not been sooner excited. Now civility did not require my stay in the apartment, and nothing but flight could conceal the state of my mind. I hastened, therefore, to a distance, and shrouded myself in the friendly secrecy of my own chamber.

The constitution of my mind is doubtless singular and perverse ; yet that opinion, perhaps, is the fruit of my ignorance. It may by no means be uncommon for men to *fashion* their conclusions in opposition to evidence and *probability*, and so as to feed their malice, and subvert their happiness. Thus it was, in an eminent degree, in my case ; the simple fact was connected, in my mind, with a train of the most hateful consequences. The depravity of Welbeck was inferred from it. The charms of this angelic woman were tarnished and withered. I had formerly surveyed her as a precious and

perfect monument, but now it was a scene of ruin and blast.

This had been a source of sufficient anguish ; but this was not all. I recollected that the claims of a parent had been urged. Will you believe that these claims were now admitted, and that they heightened the iniquity of Welbeck into the blackest and most stupendous of all crimes ?—These ideas were necessarily transient. Conclusions more formidable to appearances succeeded. This lady might have been lately reduced to widowhood. The recent loss of a beloved companion would sufficiently account for her dejection, and make her present situation compatible with duty.

By this new train of ideas I was somewhat comforted. I saw the folly of precipitate inferences, and the injustice of my atrocious imputations, and acquired some degree of patience in my present state of uncertainty. My heart was lightened of its wonted burthen ; and I laboured to invent
some

some harmless explication of the scene that I had witnessed the preceding night.

At dinner Welbeck appeared as usual, but not the lady. I ascribed her absence to some casual indisposition, and ventured to enquire into the state of her health. My companion said she was well, but that she had left the city for a month or two, finding the heat of summer inconvenient where she was. This was no unplaussible reason for retirement. A candid mind would have acquiesced in this representation, and found in it nothing inconsistent with a supposition respecting the cause of appearances favourable to her character: but otherwise was I affected. The uneasiness which had flown for a moment, returned, and I sunk into gloomy silence.

From this I was roused by my patron, who requested me to deliver a billet, which he put into my hand, at the counting-house of Mr. Thetford, and to bring him an answer. This message was speedily performed. I entered a large building by the river side. A spacious apartment presented

itself, well furnished with pipes and hogsheds. In one corner was a smaller room, in which a gentleman was busy at writing. I advanced to the door of the room, but was there met by a young person, who received my paper, and delivered it to him within. I stood still at the door, but was near enough to overhear what would pass between them.

The letter was laid upon the desk, and presently he that sat at it, lifted his eyes, and glanced at the superscription. He scarcely spoke above a whisper; but his words, nevertheless, were clearly distinguishable. I did not call to mind the sound of his voice, but his words called up a train of recollections.

“Lo!” said he, carelessly, “this is from the *Nabob*!”

An incident so slight as this was sufficient to open a spacious scene of meditation. This little word, half whispered in a thoughtless mood, was a key to unlock an extensive cabinet of secrets. Thetford was probably indifferent whether his exclamation was overheard.

heard. Little did he think on the inferences which would be built upon it.

“The Nabob!”—By this appellation had some one been denoted in the chamber-dialogue, of which I had been an unsuspected auditor. The man who pretended poverty, and yet gave proofs of inordinate wealth—whom it was pardonable to defraud of thirty thousand dollars—first, because the loss of that sum would be trivial to one opulent as he; and, secondly, because he was imagined to have acquired this opulence by other than honest methods. Instead of forthwith returning home, I wandered into the fields to indulge myself in the new thoughts which were produced by this occurrence.

I entertained no doubt that the person alluded to was my patron. No new light was thrown upon his character, unless something were deducible from the charge vaguely made, that his wealth was the fruit of illicit practices. He was opulent, and the sources of his wealth were unknown, if not to the

rest of the community, at least to Thetford. But here a plot had been laid. The fortune of Thetford's brother was to rise from the success of artifices, of which the credulity of Welbeck was to be the victim. To detect and to counterwork this plot was obviously my duty. My interference might now indeed be too late to be useful; but this was at least to be ascertained by experiment.

How should my intention be effected? I had hitherto concealed from Welbeck my adventures at Thetford's house. These it was now necessary to disclose, and to mention the recent occurrence. My deductions, in consequence of my ignorance, might be erroneous; but of their truth, his knowledge of his own affairs would enable him to judge. It was possible that Thetford and he, whose chamber-conversation I had overheard, were different persons. I endeavoured in vain to ascertain their identity by a comparison of their voices. The words lately heard, my remembrance did not enable me certainly to pronounce to be uttered by the same organs.

This

This uncertainty was of little moment. It sufficed that Welbeck was designated by this appellation, and that therefore he was proved to be the subject of some fraudulent proceeding. The information that I possessed, it was my duty to communicate as expeditiously as possible. I was resolved to employ the first opportunity that offered for this end.

My meditations had been ardently pursued; and when I recalled my attention, I found myself bewildered among fields and fences. It was late before I extricated myself from unknown paths, and reached home.

I entered the parlour, but Welbeck was not there. A table, with tea-equipage for one person, was set, from which I inferred that Welbeck was engaged abroad. This belief was confirmed by the report of the servant. He could not inform me where his master was, but merely that he would not take tea at home. This incident was a source of vexation and impatience. I knew not but
that

that delay would be of the utmost moment to the safety of my friend. Wholly unacquainted as I was with the nature of his contracts with Thetford, I could not decide whether a single hour would not avail to obviate the evils that threatened him. Had I known whither to trace his footsteps, I should certainly have sought an immediate interview ; but as it was, I was obliged to wait with what patience I could collect for his return to his own house.

I waited hour after hour in vain. The sun declined, and the shades of evening descended; but Welbeck was still at a distance.

CHAP. IX.

A DREADFUL TALE.

WELBECK did not return, though hour succeeded hour till the clock struck ten. I enquired of the servants, who informed me that their master was not accustomed to stay out so late. I seated myself at a table in the parlour, on which there stood a light, and listened for the signal of his coming, either by the sound of steps on the pavement without, or by a peal from the bell. The silence was uninterrupted and profound, and each minute added to my sum of impatience and anxiety.

To

To relieve myself from the heat of the weather, which was aggravated by the condition of my thoughts, as well as to beguile this tormenting interval, it occurred to me to betake myself to the bath. I left the candle where it stood, and imagined that even in the bath I should hear the sound of the bell, which would be rung upon his arrival at the door.

No such signal occurred; and after taking this refreshment, I prepared to return to my post. The parlour was still unoccupied. But this was not all;—the candle I had left upon the table was gone. This was an inexplicable circumstance. On my promise to wait for their master, the servants had retired to bed. No signal of any one's entrance had been given. The street-door was locked, and the key hung at its customary place upon the wall. What was I to think? It was obvious to suppose that the candle had been removed by a domestic, but their footsteps could not be traced; and I was not sufficiently acquainted with the house to find
the

the way, especially immersed in darkness, to their chamber. One measure, however, it was evidently proper to take, which was to supply myself anew with a light. This was instantly performed; but what was next to be done?

I was weary of the perplexities in which I was embroiled. I saw no avenue to escape from them, but that which led me to the bosom of Nature, and to my ancient occupations. For a moment I was tempted to resume my rustic garb, and on that very hour to desert this habitation. One thing only detained me—the desire to apprize my patron of the treachery of Thetford. For this end I was anxious to obtain an interview; but now I reflected that this information could by other means be imparted. Was it not sufficient to write him briefly these particulars, and leave him to profit by the knowledge? Thus I might likewise acquaint him with my motives for thus abruptly and unseasonably deserting his service.

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To the execution of this scheme pen and paper were necessary. The business of writing was performed in the chamber on the third story. I had been hitherto denied access to this room; in it was a show of papers and books. Here it was that the task for which I had been retained, was to be performed; but I was to enter it, and leave it only in company with Welbeck. For what reasons, I asked, was this procedure to be adopted?

The influence of prohibitions and an appearance of disguise in awakening curiosity, are well known. My mind fastened upon the idea of this room with an unusual degree of intenseness. I had seen it but for a moment. Many of Welbeck's hours were spent in it. It was not to be inferred that they were consumed in idleness:—what then was the nature of his employment, over which a veil of such impenetrable secrecy was cast?

Will you wonder that the design of entering this recess was insensibly formed? Possibly it was locked, but its accessibleness was likewise

likewise possible. I meant not the commission of any crime. My principal purpose was to procure the implements of writing, which were elsewhere not to be found. I should neither unseal papers, nor open drawers: I would merely take a survey of the volumes, and attend to the objects that spontaneously presented themselves to my view. In this there surely was nothing criminal or blameworthy. Meanwhile, I was not unmindful of the sudden disappearance of the candle. This incident filled my bosom with the inquietudes of fear, and the perturbations of wonder.

Once more I paused to catch any sound that might arise from without. All was still. I seized the candle, and prepared to mount the stairs. I had not reached the first landing, when I called to mind my midnight meeting with Welbeck at the door of his daughter's chamber. The chamber was now desolate—perhaps it was accessible; if so, no injury could be done by entering it. My curiosity was strong, but it pictured to itself
no

no precise object. Three steps would bear me to the door. The trial whether it was fastened, might be made in a moment; and I readily imagined that something might be found within, to reward the trouble of examination. The door yielded to my hand, and I entered.

No remarkable object was discoverable. The apartment was supplied with the usual furniture. I bent my steps towards a table, over which a mirror was suspended. My glances, which roved with swiftness from one object to another, shortly lighted on a miniature portrait that hung near. I scrutinized it with eagerness. It was impossible to overlook its resemblance to my own visage. This was so great, that for a moment I imagined myself to have been the original from which it had been drawn. This flattering conception yielded place to a belief merely of similitude between me and the genuine original.

The thoughts which this opinion was fitted to produce, were suspended by a new object.

A small

A small volume, that had apparently been much used, lay upon the toilet. I opened it, and found it to contain some of the Dramas of Apostolo Zeno. I turned over the leaves: a written paper saluted my sight. A single glance informed me that it was English. For the present I was insensible to all motives that would command me to forbear. I seized the paper with an intention to peruse it.

At that moment a stunning report was heard;—it was loud enough to shake the walls of the apartment, and abrupt enough to throw me into tremors. I dropped the book, and yielded for a moment to confusion and surprise. From what quarter it came I was unable accurately to determine; but there could be no doubt, from its loudness, that it was near, and even in the house. It was no less manifest that the sound arose from the discharge of a pistol. Some hand must have drawn the trigger. I recollected the disappearance of the candle from the room below. Instantly a supposition

darted into my mind, which made my hair rise, and my teeth chatter.

“ This,” I said, “ is the deed of Welbeck. He entered while I was absent from the room ; he repaired to his chamber, and, prompted by some unknown instigation, has inflicted on himself death !”

This idea had a tendency to palsy my limbs and my thoughts. Some time passed in painful and tumultuous fluctuation. My aversion to this catastrophe, rather than a belief of being by that means able to prevent or repair the evil, induced me to attempt to enter his chamber. It was possible that my conjectures were erroneous.

The door of his room was locked. I knocked—I demanded entrance in a low voice. I put my eye and my ear to the keyhole and the crevices ;—nothing could be heard or seen. It was unavoidable to conclude that no one was within, yet the effluvia of gunpowder was perceptible.

Perhaps the room above had been the scene of this catastrophe. I ascended the
second

second flight of stairs. I approached the door. No sound could be caught by my most vigilant attention. I put out the light that I carried, and was then able to perceive that there was light within the room. I scarcely knew how to act. For some minutes I paused at the door. I spoke, and requested permission to enter. My words were succeeded by a deathlike stillness. At length I ventured softly to withdraw the bolt, to open the door, and to advance within the room. Nothing could exceed the horror of my expectation, yet I was startled by the scene that I beheld.

In a chair, whose back was placed against the front wall, sat Welbeck. My entrance alarmed him not, nor roused him from the stupor into which he was plunged. He rested his hands upon his knees, and his eyes were rivetted to something that lay, at the distance of a few feet before him, on the floor. A second glance was sufficient to inform me of what nature this object was. It was the body of a man, bleeding, ghastly,
and

and still exhibiting the marks of convulsion and agony !

I shall omit to describe the shock which a spectacle like this communicated to my unpractised senses. I was nearly as panic-struck and powerless as Welbeck himself. I gazed, without power of speech, at one time, at Welbeck ; then I fixed terrified eyes on the distorted features of the dead. At length Welbeck, recovering from his reverie, looked up, as if to see who it was that had entered. No surprise, no alarm was betrayed by him on seeing me ;—he manifested no desire or intention to interrupt the fearful silence.

My thoughts wandered in confusion and terror. The first impulse was to fly from the scene, but I could not be long insensible to the exigencies of the moment. I saw that affairs must not be suffered to remain in their present situation. The insensibility or despair of Welbeck required consolation and succour. How to communicate my thoughts, or offer my assistance, I knew not. What led to
this

this murderous catastrophe—who it was whose breathless corpse was before me—what concern Welbeck had in producing his death, were as yet unknown.

At length he rose from his seat, and strode at first with faltering, and then with more stedfast steps across the floor. This motion seemed to put him in possession of himself. He seemed now, for the first time, to recognise my presence. He turned to me, and said, in a tone of severity—

“How now! What brings you here?”

This rebuke was unexpected. I stammered out in reply, that the report of the pistol had alarmed me, and that I came to discover the cause of it.

He noticed not my answer, but resumed his perturbed steps, and his anxious, but abstracted looks. Suddenly he checked himself, and glancing a furious eye at the corpse, he muttered—“Yes, the die is cast; this worthless and miserable scene shall last no longer!—I will at once get rid of life and all its humiliations!”

Here succeeded a new pause. The course of his thoughts seemed now to become once more tranquil. Sadness, rather than fury, overspread his features ; and his accent, when he spoke to me, was not faltering, but solemn.

“ Mervyn,” said he, “ you comprehend not this scene. Your youth and inexperience make you a stranger to a deceitful and flagitious world. You know me not. It is time that this ignorance should vanish. The knowledge of me and my actions may be of use to you—it may teach you to avoid the shoals on which my virtue and my peace have been wrecked ; but to the rest of mankind it can be of no use. The ruin of my fame is perhaps irretrievable ; but the height of my iniquity need not be known. I perceive in you a rectitude and firmness worthy to be trusted ; promise me, therefore, that not a syllable of what I tell you shall ever pass your lips.”

I had lately experienced the inconvenience of a promise ; but I was now confused, embarrassed,

embarrassed, ardently inquisitive as to the nature of this scene, and unapprized of the motives that might afterwards occur, persuading or compelling me to disclosure. The promise which he exacted was given. He resumed—

“ I have detained you in my service, partly for your own benefit, but chiefly for mine. I intended to inflict upon you injury, and to do you good. Neither of these ends can I now accomplish, unless the lessons which my example may inculcate, shall inspire you with fortitude, and arm you with caution.

“ What it was that made me thus, I know not. I am not destitute of understanding. My thirst of knowledge, though irregular, is ardent. I can talk and feel as virtue and justice prescribe; yet the tenor of my actions has been uniform. One tissue of iniquity and folly has been my life, while my thoughts have been familiar with enlightened and disinterested principles. Scorn and detestation I have heaped upon
I 2 myself.

myself. Yesterday is remembered with remorse ; to-morrow is contemplated with anguish and fear ; yet every day is productive of the same crimes and of the same follies.

“ I was left by the insolvency of my father (a trader of Liverpool) without any means of support but such as labour should afford me. Whatever could generate pride and the love of independence, was my portion. Whatever could incite to diligence, was the growth of my condition ; yet my indolence was a cureless disease, and there were no arts too fordid for me to practise.

“ I was content to live on the bounty of a kinsman. His family was numerous, and his revenue small. He forbore to upbraid me, or even to insinuate the propriety of providing for myself ; but he empowered me to pursue any liberal or mechanical profession which might suit my taste. I was insensible to every generous motive. I laboured to forget my dependant and disgraceful condition, because the remembrance was a source of anguish, without being able
to

to inspire me with a steady resolution to change it.

“ I contracted an acquaintance with a woman who was unchaste, perverse, and malignant. Me, however, she found it no difficult task to deceive. My uncle remonstrated against the union. He took infinite pains to unveil my error, and to convince me that wedlock was improper for one destitute as I was of the means of support, even if the object of my choice were personally unexceptionable.

“ His representations were listened to with anger. That he thwarted my will in this respect, even by affectionate expostulation, cancelled all that debt of gratitude which I owed to him. I rewarded him for all his kindness by invective and disdain, and hastened to complete my ill-omened marriage. I had deceived the woman's father by assertions of possessing secret resources. To gratify my passion, I descended to dissimulation and falsehood. He admitted me into his family as the husband of his child; but the character of my wife, and

the fallacy of my assertions were quickly discovered. He denied me accommodation under his roof, and I was turned forth to the world, to endure the penalty of my rashness and my indolence.

“ Temptation would have moulded me into any villanous shape. My virtuous theories and comprehensive erudition would not have saved me from the basest of crimes. Luckily for me, I was, for the present, exempted from temptation. I had formed an acquaintance with a young American Captain. On being partially informed of my situation, he invited me to embark with him for his own country. My passage was gratuitous. I arrived in a short time at Charleston, which was the place of his abode.

“ He introduced me to his family, every member of which was, like himself, imbued with affection and benevolence. I was treated like their son and brother. I was hospitably entertained until I should be able to select some path of lucrative industry.

Such

Such was my incurable depravity, that I made no haste to select my pursuit. An interval of inoccupation succeeded, which I applied to the worst purposes.

“ My friend had a sister who was married; but, during the absence of her husband, resided with her family. Hence originated our acquaintance. The purest of human hearts, and the most vigorous understanding were her's. She idolized her husband, who well deserved to be the object of her adoration. Her affection for him, and her general principles, appeared to be confirmed beyond the power to be shaken. I sought her intercourse without illicit views; I delighted in the effusions of her candour, and the flashes of her intelligence; I conformed, by a kind of instinctive hypocrisy, to her views; I spoke and felt from the influence of immediate and momentary conviction. She imagined she had found in me a friend worthy to partake in all her sympathies, and forward all her wishes. We were mutually deceived. She was the victim of self-delusion; but I

must charge myself with practising deceit both upon myself and her.

“ I reflect with astonishment and horror on the steps which led to her degradation and to my calamity. In the high career of passion all consequences were overlooked. She was the dupe of the most audacious sophistry, and the grossest delusion. I was the slave of sensual impulses and voluntary blindness. The effect may be easily conceived. Not till symptoms of pregnancy began to appear, were our eyes opened to the ruin which impended over us.

“ Then I began to revolve the consequences which the mist of passion had hitherto concealed. I was tormented by the pangs of remorse, and pursued by the phantom of ingratitude. To complete my despair, this unfortunate lady was apprized of my marriage with another woman—a circumstance which I had anxiously concealed from her. She fled from her father’s house at a time when her husband and brother were hourly expected. What became of her I know not.

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She left behind her a letter to her father, in which the melancholy truth was told.

“ Shame and remorse had no power over my life. To elude the storm of invective and upbraiding, to quiet the uproar of my mind, I did not betake myself to voluntary death. My pusillanimity still clung to this wretched existence. I abruptly retired from the scene, and, repairing to the port, embarked in the first vessel which appeared. The ship chanced to belong to Wilmington, in Delaware; and here I sought out an obscure and cheap abode.

“ I possessed no means of subsistence. I was unknown to my neighbours, and desired to remain unknown. I was unqualified for manual labour by all the habits of my life; but there was no choice between penury and diligence—between honest labour and criminal inactivity. I mused incessantly on the forlornness of my condition. Hour after hour passed, and the horrors of want began to encompass me. I sought with eagerness for an avenue by which I might escape from it.

The perverseness of my nature led me on from one guilty thought to another. I took refuge in my customary sophistries, and reconciled myself at length to a scheme of—
forgery!

CHAP. X.

THE TALE CONTINUED.

“H^AVING ascertained my purpose, it was requisite to search out the means by which I might effect it. These were not clearly or readily suggested. The more I contemplated my project, the more numerous and arduous its difficulties appeared. I had no associates in my undertaking. A due regard to my safety, and the unextinguished sense
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“ I quickly discovered that to execute this scheme demanded time, application, and money ; none of which my present situation would permit me to devote to it. At first it appeared that an attainable degree of skill and circumspection would enable me to arrive, by means of counterfeit bills, to the pinnacle of affluence and honour. My error was detected by a closer scrutiny ; and I finally saw nothing in this path but enormous perils and insurmountable impediments.

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drudgery, any employment which the town could afford. Meanwhile, my wants were as urgent as ever, and my funds were exhausted.

“ There are few, perhaps, whose external situation resembled mine, who would have found in it any thing but incitements to industry and invention. A thousand methods of subsistence, honest, but laborious, were at my command; but to these I entertained an irreconcilable aversion. Ease, and the respect attendant upon opulence, I was willing to purchase at the price of ever-wakeful suspicion and eternal remorse; but, even at this price, the purchase was impossible.

“ The desperateness of my condition became hourly more apparent. The further I extended my view, the darker grew the clouds which hung over futurity. Anguish and infamy appeared to be the inseparable conditions of my existence. There was one mode of evading the evils that impended.

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To free myself from self-upbraiding, and to shun the persecutions of my fortune, was possible only by shaking off life itself.

“ One evening, as I traversed the bank of the creek, these dismal meditations were uncommonly intense. They at length terminated in a resolution to throw myself into the stream. The first impulse was to rush instantly to my death ; but the remembrance of papers lying at my lodgings, which might unfold more than I desired to the curiosity of survivors, induced me to postpone this catastrophe till the next morning.

“ My purpose being formed, I found my heart lightened of its usual weight. By you it will be thought strange, but it is nevertheless true, that I derived from this new prospect not only tranquillity, but cheerfulness. I hastened home. As soon as I entered, my landlord informed me that a person had been searching for me in my absence. This was an unexampled incident, and foreboded me no good. I was strongly persuaded that my visitant had been led
hither

hither not by friendly, but hostile purposes. This persuasion was confirmed by the description of the stranger's guise and demeanour given by my landlord. My fears instantly recognised the image of Watson—the man by whom I had been so eminently benefited, and whose kindness I had compensated by the ruin of his sister, and the confusion of his family.

“An interview with this man was less to be endured, than to look upon the face of an avenging Deity. I was determined to avoid this interview, and for this end to execute my fatal purpose within the hour. My papers were collected with a tremulous hand, and consigned to the flames. I then bade my landlord inform all visitants that I should not return till the next day, and once more hastened towards the river.

“My way led past the inn where one of the stages from Baltimore was accustomed to stop. I was not unaware that Watson had possibly been brought in the coach which had recently arrived, and which now stood before

before the door of the inn. The danger of my being descried or encountered by him as I passed, did not fail to occur. This was to be eluded by deviating from the main street.

“ Scarcely had I turned a corner for this purpose, when I was accosted by a young man, whom I knew to be an inhabitant of the town, but with whom I had hitherto had no intercourse but what consisted in a transient salutation. He apologized for the liberty of addressing me, and at the same time enquired if I understood the French language.

“ Being answered in the affirmative, he proceeded to tell me that in the stage just arrived, had come a passenger—a youth who appeared to be French, who was wholly unacquainted with our language, and who had been seized with a violent disease.

“ My informant had felt compassion for the forlorn condition of the stranger, and had just been seeking me at my lodgings, in hopes that my knowledge of French
would

would enable me to converse with the sick man, and obtain from him a knowledge of his situation and views.

“The apprehensions I had precipitately formed were thus removed, and I readily consented to perform this service. The youth was indeed in a deplorable condition. Besides the pains of his disease, he was overpowered by dejection. The innkeeper was extremely anxious for the removal of his guest; he was by no means willing to sustain the trouble and expence of a sick or a dying man, for which it was scarcely probable that he should ever be reimbursed. The traveller had no baggage, and his dress betokened the pressure of many wants.

“My compassion for this stranger was powerfully awakened. I was in possession of a suitable apartment, for which I had no power to pay the rent that was accruing; but my inability in this respect was unknown, and I might enjoy my lodgings unmolested for some weeks. The fate of this youth would be speedily decided, and I should be left at liberty

liberty to execute my first intentions before my embarrassments should be visibly increased.

“After a moment’s pause, I conducted the stranger to my home, placed him in my own bed, and became his nurse. His malady was such as is known in the tropical islands by the name of the yellow or malignant fever; and the physician who was called, speedily pronounced his case desperate.

“It was my duty to warn him of the death that was hastening, and to promise the fulfilment of any of his wishes, not inconsistent with my present situation. He received my intelligence with fortitude, and appeared anxious to communicate some information respecting his own state. His pangs and his weakness scarcely allowed him to be intelligible. From his feeble efforts and broken narrative I collected thus much concerning his family and fortune.

“His father’s name was Vincentio Lodi. From a merchant at Leghorn, he had changed himself into a planter in the island
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of Guadaloupe. His son had been sent, at an early age, for the benefits of education, to Europe. The young Vincentio was at length informed by his father that, being weary of his present mode of existence, he had determined to sell his property, and transport himself to the United States. The son was directed to hasten home, that he might embark with his father on this voyage.

The summons was cheerfully obeyed. The youth, on his arrival at the island, found preparation making for the funeral of his father. It appeared that the elder Lodi had flattered one of his slaves with the prospect of his freedom, but had, nevertheless, included this slave in the sale that he had made of his estate. Actuated by revenge, the slave assassinated Lodi in the open street, and resigned himself, without a struggle, to the punishment which the law had provided for such a deed.

“ The property had been recently transferred, and the price was now presented to young Vincentio by the purchaser. He was by no means

means inclined to adopt his father's project, and was impatient to return with his inheritance to France. Before this could be done, the conduct of his father had rendered a voyage to the Continent indispensable.

“Lodi had a daughter, whom, a few weeks previous to his death, he had entrusted to an American Captain, for whom he had contracted a friendship. The vessel was bound to Philadelphia; but the conduct she was to pursue, and the abode she was to select on her arrival, were known only to the father, whose untimely death involved the son in considerable uncertainty with regard to his sister's fate. His anxiety on this account induced him to seize the first conveyance that offered. In a short time he landed at Baltimore.

“As soon as he recovered from the fatigues of his voyage, he prepared to go to Philadelphia: thither his baggage was immediately sent under the protection of a passenger and countryman. His money consisted of Portuguese gold, which, in pursuance of
advice,

advice, he had changed into bank-notes. He besought me, in pathetic terms, to search out his sister, whose youth, poverty, and ignorance of the language and manners of the country might expose her to innumerable hardships. At the same time he put a pocket-book and a small volume into my hand, indicating, by his countenance and gestures, his desire that I would deliver them to his sister.

“ His obsequies being decently performed, I had leisure to reflect upon the change in my condition which this incident had produced. In the pocket-book were found bills to the amount of twenty thousand dollars. The volume proved to be a manuscript, written by the elder Lodi in Italian, and contained memoirs of the Ducal house of Visconti, from whom the writer believed himself to have lineally descended.

“ Thus had I arrived, by an avenue so much beyond my foresight, at the possession of wealth. The evil which impelled me to the brink of suicide, and which was the source,

source, though not of all, yet of the larger portion of my anguish, was now removed. What claims to honour or to ease were consequent on riches, were, by an extraordinary fortune, now conferred upon me.

“ Such for a time were my new-born, but transitory raptures. I forgot that this money was not mine—that it had been received under every sanction of fidelity for another’s use. To retain it was equivalent to robbery. The sister of the deceased was the rightful claimant:—it was my duty to search her out, and perform my tacit, but sacred obligations, by putting the whole into her possession.

“ This conclusion was too adverse to my wishes not to be strenuously combated. I asked what it was that gave man the power of ascertaining the successor to his property? During his life, he might transfer the actual possession, but if vacant at his death, he, into whose hands accident should cast it, was the genuine proprietor. It is true that the law had sometimes otherwise decreed; but in
law

law there was no validity, further than it was able, by investigation and punishment, to enforce its decrees. But would the law extort this money from me ?

“ It was rather by gesture than by words that the will of Lodi was imparted. It was the topic of remote inferences and vague conjecture, rather than of explicit and unerring declarations. Besides, if the lady were found, would not prudence dictate the reservation of her fortune to be administered by me for her benefit ? Of this her age and education had disqualified herself. It was sufficient for the maintenance of both. She would regard me as her benefactor and protector. By supplying all her wants, and watching over her safety, without apprizing her of the means by which I shall be enabled to do this, I shall lay irresistible claims to her love and her gratitude.

“ Such were the sophistries by which reason was seduced, and my integrity annihilated. I hastened away from my present abode. I easily traced the baggage of the deceased to

an inn, and gained possession of it. It contained nothing but clothes and books. I then instituted the most diligent search after the young lady. For a time my exertions were fruitless.

“ Meanwhile, the possessor of this house thought proper to embark with his family for Europe. The sum which he demanded for his furniture, though enormous, was precipitately paid by me. His servants were continued in their former stations; and on the day he relinquished the mansion, I entered on possession.

“ There was no difficulty in persuading the world that Welbeck was a personage of opulence and rank. My birth and previous adventures it was proper to conceal. The facility with which mankind are misled in their estimate of characters, their proneness to multiply inferences and conjectures will not be readily conceived by one destitute of my experience. My sudden appearance on the stage, my stately reserve, my splendid habitation, and my circumspect deportment,

were

were sufficient to entitle me to homage. The artifices that were used to unveil the truth, and the guesses that were current respecting me, were adapted to gratify my ruling passion.

“ I did not remit my diligence to discover the retreat of Mademoiselle Lodi. I found her at length in the family of a kinsman of the Captain, under whose care she had come to America. Her situation was irksome and perilous. She had already experienced the evils of being destitute and indigent, and my seasonable interference snatched her from impending and less supportable ills.

“ I could safely unfold all that I knew of her brother's history, except the legacy which he had left. I ascribed the diligence with which I had sought her, to his death-bed injunctions, and prevailed upon her to accept from me the treatment which she would have received from her brother if he had continued to live, and if his power to benefit her had been equal to my own.

“ Though less can be said in praise of the
understanding

understanding than of the sensibilities of this woman, she is one whom no one could refrain from loving, though placed in situations far less favourable to the generation of that sentiment than mine. In habits of domestic and incessant intercourse, in the perpetual contemplation of features animated by boundless gratitude and ineffable sympathies, it could not be expected that either she or I should escape enchantment.

“ The poison was too sweet not to be swallowed with avidity by me. Too late I remembered that I was already enslaved by inextricable obligations. It was easy to have hidden this impediment from the eyes of my companion, but here my integrity refused to yield. I can, indeed, lay claim to little merit on account of this forbearance. If there had been no alternative between deceit and the frustration of my hopes, I should doubtless have dissembled the truth with as little scruple on this as on a different occasion ; but I could not be blind to the weakness of her with whom I had to contend.

CHAP. XI.

THE CATASTROPHE.

“MEANWHILE large deductions had been made from my stock of money, and the remnant would be speedily consumed by my present mode of life. My expences far exceeded my previous expectations. In no long time I should be reduced to my ancient poverty, which the luxurious existence that I now enjoyed, and the regard due to my beloved and helpless companion, would render more irksome than ever. Some scheme to rescue me from this fate, was indispensable ; but my aversion to labour—to any pursuit, the

the end of which was merely gain, and which would require application and attention, continued undiminished.

“ I was plunged anew into dejection and perplexity. From this I was somewhat relieved by a plan suggested by Mr. Thetford. I thought I had experience of his knowledge and integrity, and the scheme that he proposed seemed liable to no possibility of miscarriage. A ship was to be purchased, supplied with a suitable cargo, and dispatched to a port in the West Indies. Loss from storms and enemies was to be precluded by insurance. Every hazard was to be enumerated, and the ship and cargo valued at the highest rate. Should the voyage be safely performed, the profits would be double the original expence. Should the ship be taken or wrecked, the insurers would have bound themselves to make ample, speedy, and certain indemnification.—Thetford’s brother, a wary and experienced trader, was to be the supercargo.

All my money was laid out upon this scheme ; scarcely enough was reserved to supply domestic and personal wants. Large debts were likewise incurred. Our caution had, as we conceived, annihilated every chance of failure. Too much could not be expended on a project so infallible ; and the vessel, amply fitted and freighted, departed on her voyage.

“ An interval, not devoid of suspense and anxiety, succeeded. My mercantile inexperience made me distrust the clearness of my own discernment ; and I could not but remember that my utter and irretrievable destruction was connected with the failure of my scheme. Time added to my distrust and apprehensions. The time, at which tidings of the ship were to be expected, elapsed without affording any information of her destiny. My anxieties, however, were to be carefully hidden from the world. I had taught mankind to believe, that this project had been adopted more for amusement than gain ; and the debts which I had contracted,

tracted, seemed to arise from willingness to adhere to established maxims, more than from the pressure of necessity.

“ Month succeeded month, and intelligence was still withheld. The notes which I had given for one-third of the cargo, and for the premium of insurance, would shortly become due. For the payment of the former, and the cancelling of the latter, I had relied upon the expeditious return, or the demonstrated loss of the vessel. Neither of these events had taken place.

“ My cares were augmented from another quarter. My companion's situation now appeared to be such as, if our intercourse had been sanctified by wedlock, would have been regarded with delight. As it was, no symptoms were equally to be deplored. Consequences, as long as they were involved in uncertainty, were extenuated or overlooked ; but now, when they became apparent and inevitable, were fertile of distress and upbraiding.

“Indefinable fears, and a desire to monopolize all the meditations and affections of this being, had induced me to perpetuate her ignorance of any but her native language, and debar her from all intercourse with the world. My friends were of course inquisitive respecting her character, adventures, and particularly her relation to me. The consciousness how much the truth redounded to my dishonour, made me solicitous to lead conjecture astray; for this purpose I did not discountenance the conclusion that was adopted by some—that she was my daughter. I reflected that all dangerous surmises would be effectually precluded by this belief.

“These precautions afforded me some consolation in my present difficulties. It was requisite to conceal the lady’s condition from the world. If this should be ineffectual, it would not be difficult to divert suspicion from my person. The secrecy that I had practised would be justified, in the apprehension of those to whom the personal condition of
Clemenza

Clemenza should be disclosed, by the feelings of a father.

“ Meanwhile, it was an obvious expedient to remove the unhappy lady to a distance from impertinent observers. A rural retreat, lonely and sequestered, was easily procured, and hither she consented to repair. This arrangement being concerted, I had leisure to reflect upon the evils which every hour brought nearer, and which threatened to exterminate me.

“ My inquietudes forbade me to sleep; and I was accustomed to rise before day, and seek some respite in the fields. Returning from one of these unseasonable rambles, I chanced to meet you. Your resemblance to the deceased Lodi, in person and visage, is remarkable. When you first met my eye, this similitude startled me. Your subsequent appeal to my compassion was clothed in such terms, as formed a powerful contrast with your dress, and prepossessed me greatly in favour of your education and capacity.

“ In my present hopeless condition, every incident, however trivial, was attentively considered, with a view to extract from it some means of escaping from my difficulties. My love for the Italian girl, in spite of all my efforts to keep it alive, had begun to languish. Marriage was impossible, and had now, in some degree, ceased to be desirable. We are apt to judge of others by ourselves. The passion I now found myself disposed to ascribe chiefly to fortuitous circumstances—to the impulse of gratitude, and the exclusion of competitors ; and believed that your resemblance to her brother, your age, and personal accomplishments might, after a certain time, and in consequence of suitable contrivances on my part, give a new direction to her feelings. To gain your concurrence, I relied upon your simplicity, your gratitude, and your susceptibility to the charms of this bewitching creature.

“ I contemplated, likewise, another end. Mrs. Wentworth is rich. A youth, who was once her favourite, and designed to inherit her

her fortunes, has disappeared for some years from the scene. His death is most probable, but of that there is no satisfactory information. The life of this person, whose name is Clavering, is an obstacle to some designs which had occurred to me in relation to this woman. My purposes were crude and scarcely formed. I need not swell the catalogue of my errors by expatiating upon them. Suffice it to say, that the peculiar circumstances of your introduction to me, led me to reflections on the use that might be made of your agency, in procuring this lady's acquiescence in my schemes. You were to be ultimately persuaded to confirm in her the belief that her nephew was dead. To this consummation it was indispensable to lead you by slow degrees, and circuitous paths. Meanwhile, a profound silence, with regard to your genuine history, was to be observed; and to this forbearance your consent was obtained with more readiness than I expected.

“ There was an additional motive for the treatment you received from me. My

personal projects and cares had hitherto prevented me from reading Lodi's manuscript; a slight inspection, however, was sufficient to prove that the work was profound and eloquent. My ambition has panted, with equal avidity, after the reputation of literature and opulence. To claim the authorship of this work, was too harmless and specious a stratagem not to be readily suggested. I meant to translate it into English, and to enlarge it by enterprising incidents of my own invention. My scruples to assume the merit of the original composer might thus be removed. For this end your assistance, as an amanuensis, would be necessary.

“ You will perceive that all these projects depended on the seasonable arrival of intelligence from ———. The delay of another week would seal my destruction. The silence might arise from the foundering of the ship, and the destruction of all on board. In this case the insurance was not forfeited, but payment could not be obtained within a year. Meanwhile, the premium and other debts must

must be immediately discharged, and this was beyond my power. In the interim I was to live in a manner that would not belie my pretensions; but my coffers were empty.

“ I cannot adequately paint the anxieties with which I have been haunted. Each hour has added to the burthen of my existence, till, in consequence of the events of this day, it has become altogether insupportable. Some hours ago I was summoned by Thetford to his house. The messenger informed me that tidings had been received of my ship. In answer to my eager interrogations, he could give no other information than that she had been captured by the British. He was unable to relate particulars.

“ News of her safe return would indeed have been far more acceptable; but even this information was a source of infinite congratulation. It precluded the demand of my insurers. The payment of other debts might be postponed for a month, and my situation be the same as before the adoption of this successful scheme. Hope and joy were

reinstated in my bosom, and I hastened to Thetford's counting-house.

“ He received me with an air of gloomy dissatisfaction. I accounted for his sadness by supposing him averse to communicate information, which was less favourable than our wishes had dictated:—he confirmed, with visible reluctance, the news of her capture. He had just received letters from his brother, acquainting him with all particulars, and containing the official documents of this transaction.

“ This had no tendency to damp my satisfaction, and I proceeded to peruse with eagerness the papers which he put into my hand. I had not proceeded far when my joyous hopes vanished. Two French mulattoes had, after much solicitation, and the most solemn promises to carry with them no articles which the laws of war decree to be contraband, obtained a passage in the vessel. She was speedily encountered by a privateer, by whom every receptacle was ransacked. In a chest, belonging to the Frenchmen, and which they
had

had affirmed to contain nothing but their clothes, were found two sabres, and other accoutrements of an officer of cavalry.— Under this pretence the vessel was captured and condemned, and this was a cause of forfeiture, which had not been provided against in the contract of insurance.

“ By this untoward event my hopes were irreparably blasted. The utmost efforts were demanded to conceal my thoughts from my companion. The anguish that preyed upon my heart was endeavoured to be masked by looks of indifference. I pretended to have been previously informed by the messenger, not only of the capture, but of the cause that led to it, and forbore to expatiate upon my loss, or to execrate the authors of my disappointment. My mind, however, was the theatre of discord and agony, and I waited with impatience for an opportunity to leave him.

“ For want of other topics, I asked by whom this information had been brought. He answered, that the bearer was Captain Amos Watton,

Watson, whose vessel had been forfeited, at the same time, under a different pretence. He added, that my name being mentioned accidentally to Watson, the latter had betrayed marks of great surprise, and been very earnest in his enquiries respecting my situation. Having obtained what knowledge Thetford was able to communicate, the Captain had departed, avowing a former acquaintance with me, and declaring his intention of paying me a visit.

“ These words operated on my frame like lightning. All within me was tumult and terror, and I rushed precipitately out of the house. I went forward with unequal steps, and at random. Some instinct led me into the fields, and I was not apprized of the direction of my steps, till looking up, I found myself upon the shore of Schuylkill.

“ Thus was I, a second time, overborne by hopeless and incurable evils. An interval of motley feelings, of specious artifice, and contemptible imposture had elapsed since my meeting with the stranger at Wilmington.

Then

Then my forlorn state had led me to the brink of suicide. A brief and feverish respite had been afforded me ; but now was I transported to the verge of the same abyss.

“ Amos Watson was the brother of the angel whom I had degraded and destroyed. What but fiery indignation and unappeasable vengeance could lead him into my presence ? — With what heart could I listen to his invectives ? — How could I endure to look upon the face of one, whom I had loaded with such atrocious and intolerable injuries ?

“ I was acquainted with his loftiness of mind, his detestation of injustice, and the whirlwind passions that ingratitude and villany like mine were qualified to awaken in his bosom. I dreaded not his violence. The death that he might be prompted to inflict, was no object of aversion. It was poverty and disgrace—the detection of my crimes—the looks and voice of malediction and upbraiding, from which my cowardice shrunk.

“ Why should I live ? — I must vanish from that stage which I had lately trodden. My
flight

flight must be instant and precipitate. To be a fugitive from exasperated creditors, and from the industrious revenge of Watson, was an easy undertaking ; but whither could I fly, where I should not be pursued by the phantoms of remorse, by the dread of hourly detection, by the necessities of hunger and thirst ?—In what scene should I be exempt from servitude and drudgery ?—Was my existence embellished with enjoyments that would justify my holding it, encumbered with hardships, and immersed in obscurity ?

“ There was no room for hesitation. To rush into the stream before me, and to put an end at once to my life and the miseries inseparably linked with it, was the only proceeding which fate had left to my choice. My muscles were already exerted for this end, when the helpless condition of Clemenza was remembered. What provision could I make against the evils that threatened her ?—Should I leave her utterly forlorn and friendless ?—Mrs. Wentworth’s temper was forgiving and compassionate. Adversity had taught her to participate,

participate, and her wealth enabled her to relieve distress. Who was there by whom such powerful claims to succour and protection could be urged as by this desolate girl? Might I not state her situation in a letter to this lady, and urge irresistible pleas for the extension of her kindness to this object?

“These thoughts made me suspend my steps. I determined to seek my habitation once more, and having written and deposited this letter, to return to the execution of my fatal purpose. I had scarcely reached my own door, when some one approached along the pavement. The form at first was undistinguishable; but by coming at length within the illumination of a lamp, it was perfectly recognised.

“To avoid this detested interview was now impossible. Watson approached and accosted me. In this conflict of tumultuous feelings I was still able to maintain an air of intrepidity. His demeanour was that of a man who struggles with his rage: his accents were hurried, and scarcely articulate.

‘I have

‘ I have ten words to say to you,’ said he ; ‘ lead into the house, and to some private room. My business with you will be dispatched in a breath.’

“ I made him no answer ; but led the way into my house, and to my study. On entering this room, I put the light upon the table, and turning to my visitant, prepared silently to hear what he had to unfold. He struck his clenched hand against the table with violence. His motion was of that tempestuous kind as to overwhelm the power of utterance, and found it easier to vent itself in gesticulations than in words. At length, he exclaimed—

‘ It is well. Now has the hour, so long and so impatiently demanded by my vengeance, arrived. Welbeck ! would that my first words could strike thee dead !—They will so, if thou hast any title to the name of man.

‘ My sister is dead !—dead of anguish and a broken heart ! Remote from her friends—in a hovel—the abode of indigence and misery !

‘ Her

‘ Her husband is no more. He returned after long absence, a tedious navigation, and vicissitudes of hardships. He flew to the bosom of his love—of his wife. She was gone;—lost to him, and to virtue! In a fit of desperation, he retired to his chamber, and dispatched himself! This is the instrument with which the deed was performed.’

“ Saying this, Watson took a pistol from his pocket, and held it to my head. I lifted not my hand to turn aside the weapon. I did not shudder at the spectacle, or shrink from his approaching hand. With fingers clasped together, and eyes fixed upon the floor, I waited till his fury was exhausted. He continued—

‘ All passed in a few hours. The elopement of his daughter—the death of his son! Oh my father! most loved and most venerable of men! to see thee changed into a maniac! haggard and wild! deterred from outrage on thyself and those around thee by fetters and stripes—what was it that saved me from a like fate?—To view this hideous
ruin,

ruin, and to think by whom it was occasioned ! yet not to become frantic like thee, my father ; or not destroy myself like thee, my brother ! my friend !—

‘ No ; for this hour was I reserved—to avenge your wrongs and mine in the blood of this ungrateful villain !

‘ There,’ continued he, producing a second pistol, and tendering it to me, ‘ there is thy defence. Take we opposite sides of this table, and fire at the same instant.’

“ During this address I was motionless. He tendered the pistol, but I unclasped not my hands to receive it.

‘ Why do you hesitate ?’ resumed he. ‘ Let the chance between us be equal ;—or fire you first.’

‘ No,’ said I, ‘ I am ready to die by your hand. I wish it. It will preclude the necessity of performing the office for myself. I have injured you, and merit all that your vengeance can inflict. I know your nature too well, to believe that my death will be perfect expiation. When the gust of indignation

nation is past, the remembrance of your deed will only add to your sum of misery ; yet I do not love you well enough to wish that you would forbear. I desire to die—and to die by another's hand rather than my own.'

‘ Coward !’ exclaimed Watson, with augmented vehemence. ‘ You know me too well to believe me capable of assassination ! Vile subterfuge !—Contemptible plea ! Take the pistol, and defend yourself !—You want not the power or the will ; but, knowing that I spurn at murder, you think your safety will be found in passiveness. Your refusal will avail you little. Your fame, if not your life, is at my mercy. If you falter now, I will allow you to live, but only till I have stabbed your reputation.’

“ I now fixed my eyes stedfastly upon him, and spoke—‘ How much a stranger are you to the feelings of Welbeck !—How poor a judge of his cowardice !—I take your pistol, and consent to your conditions.’

“ We took opposite sides of the table.

‘ Are you ready ?’ he cried ; ‘ fire !’

“ Both

“ Both triggers were drawn at the same instant. Both pistols were discharged. Mine was negligently raised. Such is the untoward chance that presides over human affairs—such is the malignant destiny by which my steps have ever been pursued—the bullet whistled harmlessly by me. Levelled by an eye that never before failed, and with so small an interval between us, I escaped; but my blind and random shot took place in his heart.

“ There is the fruit of this disastrous meeting. The catalogue of death is thus completed. Thou sleepest, Watson!—Thy sister is at rest, and so art thou! Thy vows of vengeance are at an end. It was not reserved for thee to be thy own and thy sister’s avenger. Welbeck’s measure of transgressions is now full, and his own hand must execute the justice that is due to him!”

CHAP. XII.

EFFECTS OF DESPAIR.

SUCH was Welbeck's tale, listened to by me with an eagerness in which every faculty was absorbed. How adverse to my dreams were the incidents that had just been related ! The curtain was lifted, and a scene of guilt and ignominy disclosed where my rash and inexperienced youth had suspected nothing but loftiness and magnanimity.

For a while the wondrousness of this tale kept me from contemplating the consequences that awaited us. My unfledged fancy had
not

not hitherto soared to this pitch. All was astounding by its novelty, or terrific by its horror. The very scene of these offences partook, to my rustic apprehension, of fairy splendour and magical abruptness. My understanding was bemazed, and my senses were taught to distrust their own testimony.

From this musing state I was recalled by my companion, who said to me, in solemn accents—"Mervyn! I have but two requests to make. Assist me to bury these remains, and then accompany me across the river. I have no power to compel your silence on the acts that you have witnessed. I have meditated to benefit, as well as to injure you; but I do not desire that your demeanour should conform to any other standard than justice. You have promised, and to that promise I trust.

"If you chuse to fly from this scene—to withdraw yourself from what you may conceive to be the theatre of guilt or peril, the avenues are open; retire unmolested and in silence. If you have a manlike spirit—if
you

you are grateful for the benefits bestowed upon you—if your discernment enables you to see that compliance with my request will entangle you in no guilt, and betray you into no danger, stay, and aid me in hiding these remains from human scrutiny.

“Watson is beyond the reach of further injury. I never intended him harm, though I have torn from him his sister and friend, and have brought his life to an untimely close. To provide him a grave is a duty that I owe to the dead and to the living. I shall quickly place myself beyond the reach of inquisitors and judges, but would willingly rescue from molestation or suspicion those whom I shall leave behind.”

What would have been the fruit of deliberation if I had had the time or power to deliberate, I know not: my thoughts flowed with tumult and rapidity. To shut this spectacle from my view was the first impulse; but to desert this man in a time of so much need appeared a thankless and dastardly deportment. To remain where I was, to conform

implicitly to his direction, required no effort. Some fear was connected with his presence, and with that of the dead ; but in the tremulous confusion of my present thoughts, solitude would conjure up a thousand phantoms.

I made no preparation to depart: I did not verbally assent to his proposal. He interpreted my silence into acquiescence: he wrapped the body in the carpet, and then lifting one end, cast at me a look which indicated his expectations that I would aid him in lifting this ghastly burthen. During this process, the silence was unbroken.

I knew not whither he intended to convey the corpse. He had talked of burial, but no receptacle had been provided. How far safety might depend upon his conduct in this particular, I was unable to estimate. I was in too heartless a mood to utter my doubts. I followed his example in raising the corpse from the floor.

He led the way into the passage, and down stairs. Having reached the first floor, he
unbolted

unbolted a door which led into the cellar. The stairs and passage were illuminated by lamps that hung from the ceiling, and were accustomed to burn during the night. Now, however, we were entering darksome and murky recesses.

“Return,” said he, in a tone of command, “and fetch the light : I will wait for you.”

I obeyed. As I returned with the light, a suspicion stole into my mind that Welbeck had taken this opportunity to fly, and that on regaining the foot of the stairs, I should find the spot deserted by all but the dead. My blood was chilled by this image : the momentary resolution it inspired was to follow the example of the fugitive, and leave the persons, whom the ensuing day might convene on this spot, to form their own conjectures as to the cause of this catastrophe.

Meanwhile, I cast anxious eyes forward. Welbeck was discovered in the same place and posture in which he had been left. Lifting the corpse and its shroud in his arms,

he directed me to follow him. The vaults beneath were lofty and spacious. He passed from one to the other till we reached a small and remote cell. Here he cast his burthen on the ground. In the fall, the face of Watson chanced to be disengaged from its covering: its closed eyes and sunken muscles were rendered in a tenfold degree ghastly and rueful by the feeble light which the candle shed upon it.

This object did not escape the attention of Welbeck: he leaned against the wall, and, folding his arms, resigned himself to reverie. He gazed upon the countenance of Watson, but his looks denoted his attention to be elsewhere employed.

As to me, my state will not be easily described. My eye roved fearfully from one object to another. By turns it was fixed upon the murdered person and the murderer. The narrow cell in which we stood, its rudely fashioned walls and arches, destitute of communication with the external air, and its palpable darkness scarcely penetrated by the rays
of

of a solitary candle, added to the silence which was deep and universal, produced an impression on my fancy which no time will obliterate.

Perhaps my imagination was distempered by terror. The incident which I am going to relate, may appear to have existed only in my fancy. Be that as it may, I experienced all the effects which the fullest belief is adapted to produce. Glancing vaguely at the countenance of Watson, my attention was arrested by a convulsive motion in the eyelids. This motion increased, till at length the eyes opened, and a glance, languid, but wild, was thrown around. Instantly they closed, and the tremulous appearance vanished.

I started from my place, and was on the point of uttering some involuntary exclamation. At the same moment Welbeck seemed to recover from his reverie.

“How is this!” said he. “Why do we linger here? Every moment is precious. We cannot dig for him a grave with our
L 3 hands.

hands. Wait here while I go in search of a spade."

Saying this, he snatched the candle from my hand, and hastened away. My eye followed the light as its gleams shifted their place upon the walls and ceilings, and gradually vanishing, gave place to unrespite'd gloom. This proceeding was so unexpected and abrupt, that I had no time to remonstrate against it. Before I retrieved the power of reflection, the light had disappeared, and the footsteps were no longer to be heard.

I was not, on ordinary occasions, destitute of equanimity ; but perhaps the imagination of man is naturally abhorrent of death until tutored into indifference by habit. Every circumstance combined to fill me with shuddering and panic : for a while I was enabled to endure my situation by the exertions of my reason. That the lifeless remains of a human being are powerless to injure or benefit, I was thoroughly persuaded. I summoned this belief to my aid, and was able, if not to subdue, yet to curb my fears. I
listened

listened to catch the sound of the returning footsteps of Welbeck, and hoped that every new moment would terminate my solitude.

No signal of his coming was afforded. At length it occurred to me that Welbeck had gone with no intention to return—that his malice had seduced me hither to encounter the consequences of his deed: he had fled, and barred every door behind him. This suspicion may well be supposed to overpower my courage, and to call forth desperate efforts for my deliverance.

I extended my hands, and went forward. I had been too little attentive to the situation and direction of these vaults and passages, to go forward with undeviating accuracy. My fears likewise tended to confuse my perceptions, and bewilder my steps. Notwithstanding the danger of encountering obstructions, I rushed towards the entrance with precipitation.

My temerity was quickly punished. In a moment I was repelled by a jutting angle of the wall with such force, that I staggered

backward, and fell. The blow was stunning ; and when I recovered my senses, I perceived that a torrent of blood was gushing from my nostrils. My clothes were moistened with this unwelcome effusion, and I could not but reflect on the hazard which I should incur by being detected in this recess, covered by these accusing stains.

This reflection once more set me on my feet, and incited my exertions. I now proceeded with greater wariness and caution. I had lost all distinct notions of my way. My motions were at random :—all my labour was to shun obstructions, and to advance whenever the vacuity would permit. By this means the entrance was at length found ; and after various efforts I arrived, beyond my hopes, at the foot of the staircase.

I ascended, but quickly encountered an insuperable impediment. The door at the stairhead was closed, and barred : my utmost strength was exerted in vain to break the lock or the hinges. Thus were my direst apprehensions fulfilled. Welbeck had left
me

me to sustain the charge of murder—to obviate suspicions the most atrocious and plausible that the course of human events is capable of producing.

Here I must remain till the morrow, till some one can be made to overhear my calls, and come to my deliverance. What effects will my appearance produce on the spectator ! Terrified by phantoms, and stained with blood, shall I not exhibit the tokens of a maniac as well as an assassin ?

The corpse of Watson will quickly be discovered. If, previous to this disclosure, I should change my blood-stained garments, and withdraw into the country, shall I not be pursued by the most vehement suspicions, and, perhaps, hunted to my obscurest retreat by the ministers of justice ? I am innocent ; but my tale, however circumstantial or true, will scarcely suffice for my vindication. My flight will be construed into a proof of incontestable guilt.

While harassed by these thoughts, my attention was attracted by a faint gleam cast

upon the bottom of the staircase. It grew stronger, hovered for a moment in my sight, and then disappeared. That it proceeded from a lamp or candle, borne by some one along the passages, was no untenable opinion, but was far less probable than that the effulgence was meteorous. I confided in the latter supposition, and fortified myself anew against the dread of preternatural dangers. My thoughts reverted to the contemplation of the hazards and suspicions which flowed from my continuance in this spot.

In the midst of my perturbed musing my attention was again recalled by an illumination like the former: instead of hovering and vanishing, it was permanent. No ray could be more feeble; but the obscurity to which it succeeded, rendered it conspicuous as an electrical flash. For a while I eyed it without moving from my place, and in momentary expectation of its disappearance.

Remarking its stability, the propriety of scrutinizing it more nearly, and of ascertaining the source whence it flowed, was at length suggested.

suggested. Hope, as well as curiosity, was the parent of my conduct. Though utterly at a loss to assign the cause of this appearance, I was willing to believe there was some connection between that cause and the means of my deliverance.

I had scarcely formed the resolution of descending the stairs, when my hope was extinguished by the recollection that the cellar had narrow and grated windows, through which light from the street might possibly have found access. A second recollection supplanted this belief; for in my way to this staircase my attention would have been attracted, and my steps in some degree been guided by light coming through these avenues.

Having returned to the bottom of the stairs, I perceived every part of the long-drawn passage illuminated. I threw a glance forward to the quarter whence the rays seemed to proceed, and beheld, at a considerable distance, Welbeck in the cell which I had left, turning up the earth with a spade.

After a pause of astonishment, the nature of the error which I had committed rushed upon my apprehension. I now perceived that the darkness had misled me to a different staircase from that which I had originally descended. It was apparent that Welbeck intended me no evil, but had really gone in search of the instrument which he had mentioned.

This discovery overwhelmed me with contrition and shame, though it freed me from the terrors of imprisonment and accusation. To return to the cell which I had left, and where Welbeck was employed in his disastrous office, was the expedient which regard to my own safety unavoidably suggested.

Welbeck paused at my approach, and betrayed a momentary consternation at the sight of my ensanguined visage. The blood, by some inexplicable process of nature, perhaps by the counteracting influence of fear, had quickly ceased to flow. Whether the cause of my evasion, and of my flux of blood, was guessed, or whether his attention was
withdrawn

withdrawn by more momentous objects from my condition, he proceeded in his task in silence.

A shallow bed, and a slight covering of clay, were provided for the hapless Watson. Welbeck's movements were hurried and tremulous ; his countenance betokened a mind engrossed by a single purpose, in some degree foreign to the scene before him. An intensity and fixedness of features that were conspicuous, led me to suspect the subversion of his reason.

Having finished the task, he threw aside his implement. He then put into my hand a pocket-book, saying it belonged to Watson, and might contain something serviceable to the living : I might make what use of it I thought proper. He then remounted the stairs, and, placing the candle on a table in the hall, opened the principal door, and went forth. I was driven, by a sort of mechanical impulse, in his footsteps. I followed him, because it was agreeable to him, and

and because I knew not whither else to direct my steps.

The streets were desolate and silent. The watchman's call, remotely and faintly heard, added to the general solemnity. I followed my companion in a state of mind not easily described. I had no spirit even to enquire whither he was going. It was not till we arrived at the water's edge that I persuaded myself to break silence. I then began to reflect on the degree in which his present schemes might endanger Welbeck or myself. I had acted long enough a servile and mechanical part, and been guided by blind and foreign impulses. It was time to lay aside my fetters, and demand to know whither the path tended in which I was importuned to walk.

Meanwhile I found myself entangled among boats and shipping. I am unable to describe the spot by any indisputable tokens; I know merely that it was the termination of one of the principal streets. Here Welbeck selected a boat, and prepared to enter it. For a moment

moment I hesitated to comply with his apparent invitation. I stammered out an interrogation—"Why is this? Why should we cross the river? What service can I do for you? I ought to know the purpose of my voyage before I enter it."

He checked himself, and surveyed me for a minute in silence.—"What do you fear?" said he. "Have I not explained my wishes? Merely cross the river with me, for I cannot navigate a boat by myself. Is there anything arduous or mysterious in this undertaking? We part on the Jersey shore, and I shall leave you to your destiny. All I shall ask from you will be silence, and to hide from mankind what you know concerning me."

He now entered the boat, and urged me to follow his example. I reluctantly complied. I perceived that the boat contained but one oar, and that was a small one. He seemed startled, and thrown into great perplexity by this discovery.

"It

“It will be impossible,” said he, in a tone of panic and vexation, “to procure another at this hour. What is to be done?”

This impediment was by no means insuperable. I had sinewy arms, and knew well how to use an oar for the double purpose of oar and rudder. I took my station at the stern, and quickly extricated the boat from its neighbours and from the wharfs. I was wholly unacquainted with the river. The bar by which it was encumbered I knew to exist; but in what direction, and to what extent it existed, and how it might be avoided in the present state of the tide, I knew not. It was probable, therefore, ignorant as I was of the proper track, that our boat would speedily have grounded.

My attention, meanwhile, was fixed upon the oar. My companion sat at the prow, and was in a considerable degree unnoticed. I cast my eyes occasionally at the scene which I had left:—its novelty, joined with the incidents of my condition, threw me into a state of suspense and wonder which frequently slackened.

slackened my hand, and left the vessel to be driven by the downward current. Lights were sparingly seen, and these were perpetually fluctuating, as masts, yards, and hulls were interposed, and passed before them. In proportion as we receded from the shore, the clamours seemed to multiply; and the suggestion that the city was involved in confusion and uproar, did not easily give way to maturer thoughts. *Twelve* was the hour cried; and this ascended at once from all quarters, and was mingled with the baying of dogs, so as to produce trepidation and alarm.

From this state of magnificent and awful feeling I was suddenly called by the conduct of Welbeck. We had scarcely moved two hundred yards from the shore, when he plunged into the water. The first conception was, that some implement or part of the boat had fallen overboard. I looked back, and perceived that his seat was vacant. In my first astonishment I loosened my hold of the oar, and it floated away. The surface

was

was smooth as glass, and the eddy occasioned by his sinking was scarcely visible. I had not time to determine whether this was designed or accidental :—its suddenness deprived me of the power to exert myself for his succour. I wildly gazed around me, in hopes of seeing him rise. After some time, my attention was drawn by the sound of agitation in the water at a considerable distance.

It was too dark for any thing to be distinctly seen : there was no cry for help. The noise was like that of one vigorously struggling for a moment, and then sinking to the bottom. I listened with painful eagerness, but was unable to distinguish a third signal. He sunk to rise no more !

I was for a time inattentive to my own situation ; the dreadfulness and unexpectedness of this catastrophe occupied me wholly. The quick motion of the lights upon the shore shewed me that I was borne rapidly along with the tide. How to help myself, how to impede my course, or to regain either shore, since I had lost the oar, I was unable
to

to tell. I was no less at a loss to conjecture whither the current, if suffered to controul my vehicle, would finally transport me.

The disappearance of lights and buildings, and the diminution of the noises, acquainted me that I had passed the town. It was impossible longer to hesitate :—the shore was to be regained by one way only, which was swimming. To any exploit of this kind my strength and my skill were adequate. I threw away my loose gown, put the pocket-book of the unfortunate Watson in my mouth to preserve it from being injured by moisture, and committed myself to the stream.

I landed in a spot incommoded with mud and reeds : I sunk knee-deep into the former, and was exhausted by the fatigue of extricating myself. At length I recovered firm ground, and threw myself on the turf to repair my wasted strength, and to reflect on the measures which my future welfare enjoined me to pursue.

What

What condition was ever parallel to mine ? The transactions of the last three days resembled the monstrous creations of delirium. They were painted with vivid hues on my memory ; but so rapid and incongruous were these transitions, that I almost denied belief to their reality. They exercised a bewildering and stupifying influence on my mind, from which the meditations of an hour were scarcely sufficient to relieve me. Gradually I recovered the power of arranging my ideas, and forming conclusions.

Welbeck was dead. His property was swallowed up, and his creditors left to wonder at his disappearance. All that was left was the furniture of his house, to which Mrs. Wentworth would lay claim, in discharge of the unpaid rent. What now was the destiny that awaited the lost and friendless Mademoiselle Lodi ? Where was she concealed ? Welbeck had dropped no intimation by which I might be led to suspect the place of her abode. If my power in other respects could

could have contributed aught to her relief, my ignorance of her asylum had utterly disabled me.

But what of the murdered person? He had suddenly vanished from the face of the earth. His fate, and the place of his interment, would probably be suspected and ascertained. Was I sure to escape from the consequences of this deed? Watson had relatives and friends. What influence on their state and happiness his untimely and mysterious fate would possess, it was obvious to enquire. This idea led me to the recollection of his pocket-book. Some papers might be there explanatory to his situation.

I resumed my feet. I knew not where to direct my steps. I was dropping with wet, and shivering with the cold. I was destitute of habitation and friend. I had neither money nor any valuable thing in my possession. I moved forward mechanically and at random. Where I landed was at no great distance from the verge of the town. In a short time I discovered the glimmering
of

of a distant lamp. To this I directed my steps, and here I paused to examine the contents of the pocket-book.

I found three bank-notes, each of fifty dollars, enclosed in a piece of blank paper. Beside these were three letters, apparently written by his wife, and dated at Baltimore. They were brief, but composed in a strain of great tenderness, and containing affecting allusions to their child. I could gather from their date and tenor that they were received during his absence on his recent voyage, that her condition was considerably necessitous, and surrounded by wants which their prolonged separation had increased.

The fourth letter was open, and seemed to have been very lately written. It was directed to Mrs. Mary Watson. He informed her in it of his arrival at Philadelphia from St. Domingo, of the loss of his ship and cargo, and of his intention to hasten home with all possible expedition. He told her that all was lost but one hundred and fifty dollars, the greater part of which he
should

should bring with him, to relieve her more pressing wants. The letter was signed, folded, and superscribed, but unsealed.

A little consideration shewed me in what manner it became me, on this occasion, to demean myself. I put the bank-notes in the letter, and sealed it with a wafer, a few of which were found in the pocket-book. I hesitated some time whether I should add any thing to the information which the letter contained, by means of a pencil which offered itself to my view ; but I concluded to forbear. I could select no suitable terms in which to communicate the mournful truth. I resolved to deposit this letter at the post-office, where I knew letters could be left at all hours.

My reflections at length reverted to my own condition. What was the fate reserved for me ? How far my safety might be affected by remaining in the city in consequence of the disappearance of Welbeck, and my known connection with the fugitive, it was impossible to foresee. My fears readily suggested

suggested innumerable embarrassments and inconveniences which would flow from this source. Besides, on what pretence should I remain? To whom could I apply for protection or employment? All avenues, even to subsistence, were shut against me. The country was my sole asylum. Here, in exchange for my labour, I could at least purchase food, safety, and repose. But if my choice pointed to the country, there was no reason for a moment's delay. It would be prudent to regain the fields, and be far from this detested city before the rising of the sun.

Meanwhile I was chilled and chafed by the clothes that I wore. To change them for others was absolutely necessary to my ease. The clothes which I wore were not my own, and were extremely unsuitable to my new condition. My rustic and homely garb was deposited in my chamber at Welbeck's. These thoughts suggested the design of returning thither. I considered that probably the servants had not been alarmed—
that

—that the door was unfastened, and the house was accessible. It would be easy to enter and retire without notice; and this, not without some waverings and misgivings, I presently determined to do.

Having deposited my letter at the office, I proceeded to my late abode. I approached, and lifted the latch with caution. There were no appearances of any one having been disturbed. I procured a light in the kitchen, and hied softly and with dubious footsteps to my chamber. There I disrobed, and resumed my check shirt, trowsers, and fustian coat. This change being accomplished, nothing remained but that I should strike into the country with the utmost expedition.

In a momentary review which I took of the past, the design for which Welbeck professed to have originally detained me in his service, occurred to my mind. I knew the danger of reasoning loosely on the subject of property. To any trinket, or piece of furniture in this house, I did not allow myself to question the right of Mrs. Wentworth—

a right accruing to her in consequence of Welbeck's failure in the payment of his rent; but there was one thing which I felt an irresistible desire, and no scruples which should forbid me to possess, and that was the manuscript to which Welbeck had alluded, as having been written by the deceased Lodi.

I was well instructed in Latin, and knew the Tuscan language to be nearly akin to it. I despaired not of being at some time able to cultivate this language, and believed that the possession of this manuscript might essentially contribute to this end as well as to many others equally beneficial. It was easy to conjecture that the volume was to be found among his printed books, and it was scarcely less easy to ascertain the truth of this conjecture. I entered, not without tremulous sensations, into the apartment which had been the scene of the disastrous interview between Watson and Welbeck. At every step I almost dreaded to behold the spectre of the former rise before me.

Numerous

Numerous and splendid volumes were arranged on mahogany shelves, and screened by doors of glass. I ran swiftly over their names, and was at length so fortunate as to light upon the book of which I was in search. I immediately secured it; and leaving the candle extinguished on a table in the parlour, I once more issued forth into the street. With light steps and palpitating heart I turned my face towards the country. My necessitous condition I believed would justify me in passing without payment the Schuylkill bridge, and the eastern sky began to brighten with the dawn of morning not till I had gained the distance of nine miles from the city.

Such is the tale which I proposed to relate to you. Such are the memorable incidents of five days of my life, from which I have gathered more instruction than from the whole tissue of my previous existence. Such are the particulars of my knowledge respecting the crimes and misfortunes of Welbeck,

upon the deportment and appearance of this youth at the single interview which took place between them, and her representations were perfectly conformable to those which Mervyn had himself delivered.

Previously to this interview, Welbeck had insinuated to her that a recent event had put him in possession of the truth respecting the destiny of Clavering. A kinsman of his had arrived from Portugal, by whom this intelligence had been brought. He dexterously eluded her entreaties to be furnished with minuter information, or to introduce this kinsman to her acquaintance. As soon as Mervyn was ushered into her presence, she suspected him to be the person to whom Welbeck had alluded; and this suspicion his conversation had confirmed. She was at a loss to comprehend the reasons of the silence which he so pertinaciously maintained.

Her uneasiness, however, prompted her to renew her solicitations. On the day subsequent to the catastrophe related by Mervyn, she sent a messenger to Welbeck, with a request to see him. Gabriel, the black

servant, informed the messenger that his master had gone into the country for a week. At the end of the week a messenger was again dispatched with the same errand. He called and knocked, but no one answered his signals. He examined the entrance by the kitchen, but every avenue was closed. It appeared that the house was wholly deserted.

These appearances naturally gave birth to curiosity and suspicion. The house was repeatedly examined, but the solitude and silence within continued the same. The creditors of Welbeck were alarmed by these appearances; and their claims to the property remaining in the house were precluded by Mrs. Wentworth, who, as owner of the mansion, was legally entitled to the furniture, in place of the rent which Welbeck had suffered to accumulate.

On examining the dwelling, all that was valuable and portable, particularly linen and plate, was removed. The remainder was distrained; but the tumults of pestilence succeeded, and hindered it from being sold. Things were allowed to continue in their former situation,
and

and the house was carefully secured. We had no leisure to form conjectures on the causes of this desertion.—An explanation was afforded us by the narrative of this youth. It is probable that the servants, finding their master's absence continue, had pillaged the house, and fled.

Meanwhile, though our curiosity with regard to Welbeck was appeased, it was obvious to enquire by what series of inducements and events Mervyn was reconducted to the city, and led to the spot where I first met with him. We intimated our wishes in this respect, and our young friend readily consented to take up the thread of his story, and bring it down to the point that was desired. For this purpose the ensuing evening was selected. Having at an early hour shut ourselves up from all intruders and visitors, he continued as follows :—

I have mentioned that by sunrise I had gained the distance of nine miles from the city. My purpose was to stop at the first farmhouse, and seek employment as a day-labourer. The first person whom I

M 4

observed,

observed, was a man of placid mien and plain garb. Habitual benevolence was apparent amidst the wrinkles of age. He was traversing his buck-wheat field, and measuring, as it seemed, the harvest that was now nearly ripe.

I accosted him with diffidence, and explained my wishes. He listened to my tale with complacency, enquired into my name and family, and into my qualifications for the office to which I aspired. My answers were candid and full.

“Why,” said he, “I believe thou and I can make a bargain: we will at least try each other for a week or two. If it does not suit our mutual convenience, we can change. The morning is damp and cool, and thy plight does not appear the most comfortable that can be imagined. Come to the house, and eat some breakfast.”

The behaviour of this good man filled me with gratitude and joy. Methought I could embrace him as a father; and entrance into his house appeared like return to a long-lost and much-loved home. My desolate and lonely
condition

condition seemed to be changed for paternal regards and the tendernefs of friendship.

These emotions were confirmed and heightened by every object that presented itself under this roof. The family consisted of Mr. Hadwin, two simple and affectionate girls, his daughters, and servants. The manners of this family, quiet, artless, and cordial—the occupations allotted me—the land by which the dwelling was surrounded—its pure airs, romantic walks, and exhaustless fertility, constituted a powerful contrast to the scenes which I had left behind, and were congenial with every dictate of my understanding, and every sentiment that glowed in my heart.

My youth, mental cultivation, and circumfpect deportment entitled me to deference and confidence. Each hour confirmed me in the good opinion of Mr. Hadwin, and in the affections of his daughters. In the mind of my employer the simplicity of the husbandman, and the devotion of the Quaker, were blended with humanity and

M 5

intelligence.

intelligence. The sisters, Susan and Eliza, were unacquainted with calamity and vice through the medium of either observation or books. They were strangers to the benefits of an elaborate education; but they were endowed with curiosity and discernment, and had not suffered their slender means of instruction to remain unimproved.

The sedateness of the elder formed an amusing contrast with the laughing eye and untameable vivacity of the younger; but they smiled and they wept in unison: they thought and acted in different, but not discordant keys. On all momentous occasions they reasoned and felt alike: in ordinary cases they separated, as it were, into different tracks; but this diversity was productive, not of jarring, but of harmony.

A romantic and untutored disposition like mine may be supposed liable to strong impressions from perpetual converse with persons of their age and sex. The elder was soon discovered to have already disposed of her affections; the younger was free, and somewhat

somewhat that is more easily conceived than named, stole insensibly upon my heart. The images that haunted me at home and abroad, in her absence and her presence, gradually coalesced into one shape, and gave birth to an incessant train of latent palpitations and indefinable hopes. My days were little else than uninterrupted reveries, and night only called up phantoms more vivid and equally enchanting.

The memorable incidents which had lately happened, scarcely counterpoised my new sensations, or diverted my contemplations from the present. My views were gradually led to rest upon futurity; and in that I quickly found cause of circumspection and dread. My present labours were light, and were sufficient for my subsistence in a single state; but wedlock was the parent of new wants and of new cares. Mr. Hadwin's possessions were adequate to his own frugal maintenance; but, divided between his children, would be too scanty for either. Besides, this division could only take place at his death,

and that was an event whose speedy occurrence was neither desirable nor probable.

Another obstacle was now remembered. Hadwin was the conscientious member of a sect which forbade the marriage of its votaries with those of a different communion. I had been trained in an opposite creed, and imagined it impossible that I should ever become a proselyte to Quakerism. It only remained for me to feign conversion, or to root out the opinions of Eliza, and win her consent to a secret marriage. Whether hypocrisy was eligible, was no subject of deliberation. If the possession of all that ambition can conceive were added to the transports of union with Eliza Hadwin, and offered as the price of dissimulation, it would have been instantly rejected. My external goods were not abundant nor numerous, but the consciousness of rectitude was mine ; and, in competition with this, the luxury of the heart and of the senses, the gratifications of boundless ambition and inexhaustible wealth were contemptible and frivolous.

The

The conquest of Eliza's errors was easy ; but to introduce discord and sorrow into this family was an act of the utmost ingratitude and profligacy :—it was only requisite for my understanding clearly to discern, to be convinced of the insuperability of this obstacle. It was manifest, therefore, that the point to which my wishes tended, was placed beyond my reach.

To foster my passion, was to foster a disease destructive either of my integrity or my existence. It was indispensable to fix my thoughts upon a different object, and to debar myself even from her intercourse. To ponder on themes foreign to my darling image, and to seclude myself from her society at hours which had usually been spent with her, were difficult tasks. The latter was the least practicable. I had to contend with eyes which alternately wondered at, and upbraided me for my unkindness. She was wholly unaware of the nature of her own feelings, and this ignorance made her less scrupulous in the expression of her sentiments.

Hitherto I had needed not employment beyond myself and my companions : now my new motives made me eager to discover some means of controuling and beguiling my thoughts. In this state, the manuscript of Lodi occurred to me. In my way hither I had resolved to make the study of the language of this book, and the translation of its contents into English, the business and solace of my leisure. Now this resolution was revived with new force.

My project was perhaps singular. The ancient language of Italy possessed a strong affinity with the modern. My knowledge of the former was my only means of gaining the latter. I had no grammar or vocabulary to explain how far the meanings and inflections of Tuscan words varied from the Roman dialect. I was to ponder on each sentence and phrase, to select among different conjectures the most plausible, and to ascertain the true by patient and repeated scrutiny.

This undertaking, fantastic and impracticable as it may seem, proved upon experiment

riment to be within the compass of my powers. The detail of my progress would be curious and instructive. What impediments, in the attainment of a darling purpose, human ingenuity and patience are able to surmount—how much may be done by strenuous and solitary efforts—how the mind, unassisted, may draw forth the principles of inflection and arrangement—may profit by remote, analagous, and latent similitudes, would be forcibly illustrated by my example ; but the theme, however attractive, must for the present be omitted.

My progress was slow, but the perception of hourly improvement afforded me unspeakable pleasure. Having arrived near the last pages, I was able to pursue, with little interruption, the thread of an eloquent narration. The triumph of a leader of outlaws over the popular enthusiasm of the Milanese, and the claims of neighbouring potentates, were about to be depicted. The *Condottiero* Sforza had taken refuge from his enemies in a tomb, accidentally discovered amidst the
ruins

ruins of a Roman fortress in the Apennine. He had sought this recess for the sake of concealment; but found in it a treasure by which he would be enabled to secure the wavering and venal faith of that crew of ruffians that followed his standard, provided he fell not into the hands of the enemies who were now in search of him.

“ My tumultuous curiosity was suddenly checked by the following leaves being glued together at the edges. To dis sever them without injury to the written spaces was by no means easy. I proceeded to the task, not without precipitation. The edges were torn away, and the leaves parted.

It may be thought that I took up the thread where it had been broken; but no. The object that my eyes encountered, and which the cemented leaves had so long concealed, was beyond the power of the most capricious or lawless fancy to have prefigured; yet it bore a shadowy resemblance to the images with which my imagination

old library book with yellowed pages was

was previously occupied. I opened, and beheld—a *bank-note* !

To the first transports of surprise, the conjecture succeeded that the remaining leaves, cemented together in the same manner, might enclose similar bills. They were hastily separated, and the conjecture was verified. My sensations at this discovery were of an inexplicable kind. I gazed at the notes in silence. I moved my finger over them—held them in different positions—read and re-read the name of each sum and the signature—added them together, and repeated to myself—“ *Twenty thousand dollars* !—They are mine, and by such means !”

This sum would have redeemed the falling fortunes of Welbeck. The dying Lodi was unable to communicate all the contents of this inestimable volume. He had divided his treasure, with a view to its greater safety, between this volume and his pocket-book. Death hastened upon him too suddenly to allow him to explain his precautions. Welbeck had placed the book in his collection, pur-
posing

posing some time to peruse it ; but, deterred by anxieties, which the perusal would have dissipated, he rushed to desperation and suicide, from which some contingency, by unfolding this treasure to his view, would have effectually rescued him.

But was this event to be regretted ? This sum, like the former, would probably have been expended in the same pernicious prodigality. His career would have continued some time longer, but his inveterate habits would have finally conducted his existence to the same criminal and ignominious close.

But the destiny of Welbeck was accomplished. The money was placed, without guilt or artifice, in my possession. My fortune had been thus unexpectedly and wondrously propitious. How was I to profit by her favour ? Would not this sum enable me to gather round me all the instruments of pleasure ?—Equipage, and palace, and a multitude of servants—polished mirrors, splendid hangings, banquets, and flatterers, were equally abhorrent to my taste and my principles.

ciples. The accumulation of knowledge, and the diffusion of happiness, in which riches may be rendered eminently instrumental, were the only precepts of duty, and the only avenues to genuine felicity.

“ But what,” said I, “ is my title to this money ? By retaining it, shall I not be as culpable as Welbeck ? It came into his possession as it came into mine, without a crime ; but my knowledge of the true proprietor is equally certain, and the claims of the unfortunate stranger are as valid as ever. Indeed, if utility, and not law, be the measure of Justice, her claim, desolate and indigent as she is—unfitted, by her past life, by the softness and the prejudices of her education, for contending with calamity, is incontestible.

“ As to me, health and diligence will give me not only the competence which I seek, but the power of enjoying it. If my present condition be unchangeable, I shall not be unhappy. My occupations are salutary and meritorious ; I am a stranger to the cares as well as to the enjoyment of riches : abundant

dant means of knowledge are possessed by me, as long as I have eyes to gaze at man and at nature as they are exhibited in their original forms or in books. The precepts of my duty cannot be mistaken. The lady must be sought, and the money be restored to her."

Certain obstacles existed to the immediate execution of this scheme. How should I conduct my search? What apology should I make for withdrawing thus abruptly, and contrary to the terms of an agreement into which I had lately entered, from the family and service of my friend and benefactor, Hadwin?

My thoughts were called away from pursuing these enquiries by a rumour which had gradually swelled to formidable dimensions, and which at length reached us in our quiet retreat. The city, we were told, was involved in confusion and panic; for a pestilential disease had begun its destructive progress. Magistrates and citizens were flying to the country. The numbers of the sick multiplied.

tiplied beyond all example even in the pest-affected cities of the Levant. The malady was malignant and unsparing.

The usual occupations and amusements of life were at an end. Terror had exterminated all the sentiments of nature. Wives were deserted by husbands, and children by parents. Some had shut themselves in their houses, and debarred themselves from all communication with the rest of mankind. The consternation of others had destroyed their understanding, and their misguided steps hurried them into the midst of the danger which they had previously laboured to shun. Men were seized by this disease in the streets; passengers fled from them; entrance into their own dwelling was denied to them; they perished in the public ways!

The chambers of disease were deserted, and the sick left to die of negligence. None could be found to remove the lifeless bodies. Their remains, suffered to decay by piece-meal, filled the air with deadly exhalations, and added tenfold to the devastation.

Such

Such was the tale, distorted and diversified a thousand ways by the credulity and exaggeration of the tellers. At first I listened to the story with indifference or mirth: methought it was confuted by its own extravagance. The enormity and variety of such an evil made it unworthy to be believed. I expected that every new day would detect the absurdity and fallacy of such representations. Every new day, however, added to the number of witnesses and the consistency of the tale, till at length it was not possible to withhold my faith.

CHAP. XIV.

INSANITY.

THIS rumour was of a nature to absorb and suspend the whole soul. A certain sublimity is connected with enormous dangers, that imparts to our consternation or our pity a tincture of the pleasing. This, at least, may be experienced by those who are beyond the verge of peril. My own person was exposed to no hazard. I had leisure to conjure up terrific images, and to personate the witnesses and sufferers of this calamity. This employment was not enjoined upon me by necessity,

necessity, but was ardently pursued, and must therefore have been recommended by some nameless charm.

Others were very differently affected. As often as the tale was embellished with new incidents, or enforced by new testimony, the hearer grew pale, his breath was stifled by inquietudes, his blood was chilled, and his stomach was bereaved of its usual energies. A temporary indisposition was produced in many : some were haunted by a melancholy bordering upon madness ; and some, in consequence of sleepless panics, for which no cause could be assigned, and for which no opiates could be found, were attacked by lingering or mortal diseases.

Mr. Hadwin was superior to groundless apprehensions. His daughters, however, partook in all the consternation which surrounded them. The eldest had, indeed, abundant reason for her terror. The youth to whom she was betrothed, resided in the city. A year previous to this, he had left the house of Mr. Hadwin, who was his
uncle,

uncle, and had removed to Philadelphia, in pursuit of fortune.

He made himself clerk to a merchant, and by some mercantile adventures in which he had successfully engaged, began to flatter himself with being able, in no long time, to support a family. Meanwhile, a tender and constant correspondence was maintained between him and his beloved Susan. This girl was a soft enthusiast, in whose bosom devotion and love glowed with an ardour that has seldom been exceeded.

The first tidings of the yellow fever were heard by her with unspeakable perturbation. Wallace was interrogated by letter respecting its truth. For a time, he treated it as a vague report; at length, a confession was extorted from him that there existed a pestilential disease in the city; but, he added, that it was hitherto confined to one quarter, distant from the place of his abode.

The most pathetic entreaties were urged by her that he would withdraw into the country. He declared his resolution to

comply when the street in which he lived should become infected, and his stay should be attended with real danger. He stated how much his interests depended upon the favour of his present employer, who had used the most powerful arguments to detain him ; but declared that, when his situation should become in the least degree perilous, he would slight every consideration of gratitude and interest, and fly to Malverton. Meanwhile, he promised to communicate tidings of his safety by every opportunity.

Belding, Mr. Hadwin's next neighbour, though not uninfected by the general panic, persisted to visit the city daily with his market-cart. He set out by sunrise, and usually returned by noon. By him a letter was punctually received by Susan. As the hour of Belding's return approached, her impatience and anxiety increased. The daily epistle was received, and read in a transport of eagerness. For a while her emotion subsided ; but returned with augmented vehemence at noon on the ensuing day.

These

These agitations were too vehement for a feeble constitution like her's. She renewed her supplications to Wallace to quit the city. He repeated his assertions of being hitherto secure, and his promise of coming when the danger should be imminent. When Belding returned, and, instead of being accompanied by Wallace, merely brought a letter from him, the unhappy Susan would sink into fits of lamentation and weeping, and repel every effort to console her, with an obstinacy that partook of madness. It was at length manifest that Wallace's delays would be fatally injurious to the health of his mistress.

Mr. Hadwin had hitherto been passive. He conceived that the entreaties and remonstrances of his daughter were more likely to influence the conduct of Wallace than any representations which he could make. Now, however, he wrote the contumacious Wallace a letter, in which he laid his commands upon him to return in company with

Belding, and declared that, by a longer delay, the youth would forfeit his favour.

The malady had, at this time, made considerable progress. Belding's interest at length yielded to his fears, and this was the last journey which he proposed to make. Hence our impatience for the return of Wallace was augmented; since, if this opportunity were lost, no suitable conveyance might again be offered him.

Belding set out, as usual, at the dawn of day. The customary interval between his departure and return was spent by Susan in a tumult of hopes and fears. As noon approached, her suspense arose to a pitch of wildness and agony: she could scarcely be restrained from running along the road many miles towards the city, that she might, by meeting Belding half way, the sooner ascertain the fate of her lover. She stationed herself at a window which overlooked the road, along which Belding was to pass.

Her sister and her father, though less
4 impatient,

impatient, marked with painful eagerness the first sound of the approaching vehicle. They snatched a look at it as soon as it appeared in sight. Belding was without a companion.

This confirmation of her fears overwhelmed the unhappy Susan. She sunk into a fit, from which, for a long time, her recovery was hopeless. This was succeeded by paroxysms of a furious insanity, in which she attempted to snatch any pointed implement which lay within her reach, with a view to destroy herself. These being carefully removed, or forcibly wrested from her, she resigned herself to sobs and exclamations.

Having interrogated Belding, he informed us that he occupied his usual post in the market-place;—that, heretofore, Wallace had duly sought him out, and exchanged letters; but that, on this morning, the young man had not made his appearance, though Belding had been induced, by his wish to see him, to prolong his stay in the city much beyond the usual period.

That some other cause than sickness had occasioned this omission, was barely possible. There was scarcely room for the most sanguine temper to indulge a hope. Wallace was without kindred, and probably without friends in the city. The merchant, in whose service he had placed himself, was connected with him by no consideration but that of interest. What then must be his situation when seized with a malady which all believed to be contagious, and the fear of which was able to dissolve the strongest ties that bind human beings together?

I was personally a stranger to this youth. I had seen his letters, and they bespoke, not indeed any great refinement or elevation of intelligence, but a frank and generous spirit, to which I could not refuse my esteem; but his chief claim to my affection consisted in his consanguinity to Mr. Hadwin, and his place in the affections of Susan. His welfare was essential to the happiness of those, whose happiness had become essential to mine. I witnessed the outrages of despair in the daughter,

daughter, and the symptoms of a deep, but less violent grief in the sister and parent. Was it not possible for me to alleviate their pangs?—Could not the fate of Wallace be ascertained?

This disease assailed men with different degrees of malignity. In its worst form perhaps it was incurable; but in some of its modes, it was doubtless conquerable by the skill of physicians, and the fidelity of nurses. In its least formidable symptoms, negligence and solitude would render it fatal.

Wallace might, perhaps, experience this pest in its most lenient degree; but the desertion of all mankind—the want not only of medicines, but of food, would irrevocably seal his doom. My imagination was incessantly pursued by the image of this youth perishing alone, and in obscurity—calling on the name of distant friends, or invoking, ineffectually, the succour of those who were near.

Hitherto distress had been contemplated at a distance, and through the medium of a

fancy delighting to be startled by the wonderful, or transported by sublimity. Now the calamity had entered my own doors, imaginary evils were supplanted by real, and my heart was the seat of commiseration and horror.

I found myself unfit for recreation or employment. I shrouded myself in the gloom of the neighbouring forest; or lost myself in the maze of rocks and dells. I endeavoured, in vain, to shut out the phantoms of the dying Wallace, and to forget the spectacle of domestic woes. At length it occurred to me to ask—"May not this evil be obviated, and the felicity of the Hadwins re-established?—Wallace is friendless and succourless; but cannot I supply to him the place of protector and nurse?—Why not hasten to the city, search out his abode, and ascertain whether he be living or dead?—If he still retain life, may I not, by consolation and attendance, contribute to the restoration of his health, and conduct him once more to the bosom of his family?"

“ With

“ With what transports will his arrival be hailed!—How amply will their impatience and their sorrow be compensated by his return!—In the spectacle of their joys, how rapturous and pure will be my delight!—Do the benefits which I have received from the Hadwins demand a less retribution than this?

“ It is true that my own life will be endangered; but my danger will be proportioned to the duration of my stay in this seat of infection. The death, or the flight of Wallace may absolve me from the necessity of spending one night in the city.—The rustics who daily frequent the market are, as experience proves, exempt from this disease; in consequence, perhaps, of limiting their continuance in the city to a few hours. May I not, in this respect, conform to their example, and enjoy a similar exemption?

“ My stay, however, may be longer than the day. I may be condemned to share in the common destiny. What then? Life is

dependant on a thousand contingencies, not to be computed or foreseen. The seeds of an early and lingering death are sown in my constitution. It is vain to hope to escape the malady by which my mother and my brothers have died. We are a race, whose existence some inherent property has limited to the short space of twenty years. We are exposed, in common with the rest of mankind, to innumerable casualties ; but if these be shunned, we are unalterably fated to perish by *consumption*. Why then should I scruple to lay down my life in the cause of virtue and humanity ?—It is better to die in the consciousness of having offered an heroic sacrifice—to die by a speedy stroke, than by the perverseness of nature, in ignominious inactivity and lingering agonies.”

These considerations determined me to hasten to the city. To mention my purpose to the Hadwins, would be useless or pernicious. It would only augment the sum of their present anxieties. I should meet with a thousand obstacles in the
tenderness

tenderness and terror of Eliza, and in the prudent affection of her father. Their arguments I should be condemned to hear, but should not be able to confute; and should only load myself with imputations of perverseness and temerity.

But how else should I explain my absence?—I had hitherto preserved my lips untainted by prevarication or falsehood. Perhaps there was no occasion which would justify an untruth; but here, at least, it was superfluous or hurtful. My disappearance, if effected without notice or warning, will give birth to speculation and conjecture; but my true motives will never be suspected, and therefore will excite no fears. My conduct will not be charged with guilt: it will merely be thought upon with some regret, which will be alleviated by the opinion of my safety, and the daily expectation of my return.

But, since my purpose was to search out Wallace, I must be previously furnished

with directions to the place of his abode, and a description of his person. Satisfaction on this head was easily obtained from Mr. Hadwin; who was prevented from suspecting the motives of my curiosity, by my questions being put in a manner apparently casual. He mentioned the street, and the number of the house.

I listened with surprise. It was a house with which I was already familiar. He resided, it seems, with a merchant. Was it possible for me to be mistaken?

What, I asked, was the merchant's name?

“Thetford.”

This was a confirmation of my first conjecture. I recollected the extraordinary means by which I had gained access to the house and bedchamber of this gentleman. I recalled the person and appearance of the youth, by whose artifices I had been entangled in the snare. These artifices implied some domestic or confidential connection
between

between Thetford and my guide. Wallace was a member of the family. Could it be he by whom I was betrayed?

Suitable questions easily obtained from Hadwin a description of the person and carriage of his nephew. Every circumstance evinced the identity of their persons. Wallace then was the engaging and sprightly youth whom I had encountered at Lesher's; and who, for purposes not hitherto discoverable, had led me into a situation so romantic and perilous.

I was far from suspecting that these purposes were criminal. It was easy to infer that his conduct proceeded from juvenile wantonness, and a love of sport. My resolution was unaltered by this disclosure; and having obtained all the information which I needed, I secretly began my journey.

My reflections on the way were sufficiently employed in tracing the consequences of my project; in computing the inconveniences and dangers to which I was preparing to subject myself; in fortifying my courage
against

against the influence of rueful fights and abrupt transitions; and in imagining the measures which it would be proper to pursue in every emergency.

Connected as these views were with the family and character of Thetford, I could not but sometimes advert to those incidents which formerly happened. The mercantile alliance between him and Welbeck was remembered; the allusions which were made to the condition of the latter in the chamber conversation, of which I was an unsuspected auditor; and the relation which these allusions might possess with subsequent occurrences. Welbeck's property was forfeited. It had been confided to the care of Thetford's brother. Had the case of this forfeiture been truly or thoroughly explained?—Might not contraband articles have been admitted through the management, or under the connivance of the brothers, and might not the younger Thetford be furnished with the means of purchasing the captured vessel and her cargo, which, as usual,
would

would be sold by auction at a fifth or tenth of its real value ?

Welbeck was not alive to profit by the detection of this artifice, admitting these conclusions to be just. My knowledge will be useless to the world ; for by what motives can I be influenced to publish the truth—or by whom will my single testimony be believed, in opposition to that plausible exterior, and perhaps to that general integrity which Thetford has maintained ?—To myself it will not be unprofitable. It is a lesson on the principles of human nature—on the delusiveness of appearances—on the perviousness of fraud—and on the power with which Nature has invested human beings over the thoughts and actions of each other.

Thetford and his frauds were dismissed from my thoughts, to give place to considerations relative to Clemenza Lodi, and the money which chance had thrown into my possession. Time had only confirmed my purpose to restore these bills to the
rightful

rightful proprietor, and heightened my impatience to discover her retreat. I reflected that the means of doing this were more likely to suggest themselves at the place to which I was going, than elsewhere. I might indeed perish before my views, in this respect, could be accomplished. Against these evils I had at present no power to provide. While I lived, I would bear perpetually about me the volume, and its precious contents. If I died, a Superior Power must direct the course of this as of all other events.

CHAP. XV.

FATAL CALAMITY.

THESE meditations did not enfeeble my resolution, or slacken my pace. In proportion as I drew near the city, the tokens of its calamitous condition became more apparent. Every farmhouse was filled with supernumerary tenants; fugitives from home, and haunting the skirts of the road, eager to detain every passenger with enquiries after news. The passengers were numerous, for the tide of emigration was by no means exhausted : some were on foot, bearing in their countenances the tokens of their recent terror,

terror, and filled with mournful reflections on the forlornness of their state. Few had secured to themselves an asylum ; some were without the means of paying for victuals or lodging for the coming night ; others, who were not thus destitute, yet knew not whither to apply for entertainment, every house being already overstocked with inhabitants, or barring its inhospitable doors at their approach.

Families of weeping mothers and dismayed children, attended with a few pieces of indispensable furniture, were carried in vehicles of every form. The parent or husband had perished ; and the price of some moveable, or the pittance handed forth by public charity, had been expended to purchase the means of retiring from this theatre of disasters, though uncertain and hopeless of accommodation in the neighbouring districts.

Between these and the fugitives whom curiosity had led to the road, dialogues frequently took place, to which I was suffered to

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to listen. From every mouth the tale of sorrow was repeated with new aggravations. Pictures of their own distress, or of that of their neighbours, were exhibited in all the hues which imagination can annex to pestilence and poverty.

My preconceptions of the evil now appeared to have fallen short of the truth. The dangers into which I was rushing, seemed more numerous and imminent than I had previously imagined. I wavered not in my purpose. A panic crept to my heart, which more vehement exertions were necessary to subdue or controul ; but I harboured not a momentary doubt that the course which I had taken was prescribed by duty. There was no difficulty or reluctance in proceeding. All for which my efforts were demanded, was to walk in this path without tumult or alarm.

Various circumstances had hindered me from setting out upon this journey as early as was proper. My frequent pauses to listen to the narratives of travellers, contributed likewise

likewise to procrastination. The sun had nearly set before I reached the precincts of the city. I pursued the track which I had formerly taken, and entered High Street after nightfall. Instead of equipages, and a throng of passengers, the voice of levity and glee which I had formerly observed, and which the mildness of the season would at other times have produced, I found nothing but a dreary solitude.

The market-place, and each side of this magnificent avenue, were illuminated, as before, by lamps; but between the verge of Schuylkill and the heart of the city, I met not more than a dozen figures, and these were ghost-like, wrapped in cloaks, from behind which they cast upon me glances of wonder and suspicion; and, as I approached, changed their course, to avoid touching me. Their clothes were sprinkled with vinegar; and their nostrils defended from contagion by some powerful perfume.

I cast a look upon the houses which I recollected to have formerly been, at this hour,
brilliant

brilliant with lights, resounding with lively voices, and thronged with busy faces. Now they were closed above and below, dark, and without tokens of being inhabited. From the upper windows of some, a gleam sometimes fell upon the pavement I was traversing, and shewed that their tenants had not fled, but were secluded or disabled.

These tokens were new, and awakened all my panics. Death seemed to hover over this scene, and I dreaded that the floating pestilence had already lighted on my frame. I had scarcely overcome these tremors, when I approached a house, the door of which was open, and before which stood a vehicle, which I presently recognised to be a *hearse*.

The driver was seated on it. I stood still to mark his visage, and to observe the course which he proposed to take. Presently a coffin, borne by two men, issued from the house. The driver was a negro, but his companions were white. Their features were marked by ferocious indifference to danger or pity. One of them, as he assisted in thrusting
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the coffin into the cavity provided for it, said—"I'll be damned if I think the poor dog was quite dead. It was not the *fever* that ailed him, but the sight of the girl and her mother on the floor. I wonder how they all got into that room. What carried them there?"

The other furlily muttered—"Their legs to be sure."

"But what should they hug together in one room for?"

"To save us trouble to be sure."

"And I thank them with all my heart;—but damn it, it was not right to put him in his coffin before the breath was fairly gone. I thought the last look he gave me, told me to stay a few minutes."

"Pihaw! he could not live. The sooner dead, the better for him, as well as for us. Did you mark how he eyed us, when we carried away his wife and daughter?—I never cried in my life, since I was knee-high; but curse me if I ever felt in better tune for the business than just then.—Hey!" continued he,

he, looking up, and observing me standing a few paces distant, and listening to their discourse, “ what’s wanted?—Any body dead?”

I said not to answer or parley, but hurried forward. My joints trembled, and cold drops stood on my forehead. I was ashamed of my own infirmity, and, by vigorous efforts of my reason, regained some degree of composure. The evening had now advanced, and it behoved me to procure accommodation at some of the inns.

These were easily distinguished by their signs; but many were without inhabitants. At length I lighted upon one, the hall of which was open, and the windows lifted. After knocking for some time, a young girl appeared, with many marks of distress. In answer to my question, she said that both her parents were sick, and that they could receive no one. I enquired in vain for any other tavern, at which strangers might be accommodated. She knew of none such; and left me, on some one calling to her from

from above, in the midst of my embarrassment. After a moment's pause, I returned, discomfited and perplexed, to the street.

I proceeded in a considerable degree at random. At length I reached a spacious building, in Fourth Street, which the sign-post shewed me to be an inn. I knocked loudly and often at the door. At length a female opened the window of the second story, and, in a tone of peevishness, demanded what I wanted?—I told her that I wanted lodging.

“Go hunt for it somewhere else,” said she; “you’ll find none here.”

I began to expostulate; but she shut the window with quickness, and left me to my own reflections.

I began now to feel some regret at the journey I had taken. Never, in the depths of caverns or forests, was I equally conscious of loneliness. I was surrounded by the habitations of men; but I was destitute of associate or friend. I had money, but a
horse

horse shelter, or a morsel of food, could not be purchased. I came for the purpose of relieving others, but stood in the utmost need myself. Even in health my condition was helpless and forlorn; but what would become of me, should this fatal malady be contracted? To hope that an asylum would be afforded to a sick man, which was denied to one in health, was unreasonable.

The first impulse which flowed from these reflections, was to hasten back to Malverton; which, with sufficient diligence, I might hope to regain before the morning light. I could not, methought, return upon my steps with too much speed. I was prompted to run, as if the pest was rushing upon me, and could be eluded only by the most precipitate flight.

This impulse was quickly counteracted by new ideas. I thought with indignation and shame on the imbecility of my proceeding. I called up the images of Susan Hadwin and of Wallace. I reviewed the motives which had led me to the undertaking of this

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journey. Time had by no means diminished their force. I had indeed nearly arrived at the accomplishment of what I had intended. A few steps would carry me to Thetford's habitation. This might be the critical moment, when succour was most needed, and would be most efficacious.

I had previously concluded to defer going thither till the ensuing morning; but why should I allow myself a moment's delay?—I might at least gain an external view of the house, and circumstances might arise which would absolve me from the obligation of remaining an hour longer in the city. All for which I came might be performed, the destiny of Wallace be ascertained, and I be once more safe within the precincts of Malverton before the return of day.

I immediately directed my steps towards the habitation of Thetford. Carriages, bearing the dead, were frequently discovered. A few passengers likewise occurred, whose hasty and perturbed steps denoted their participation in the common distress.

The house, of which I was in quest, quickly appeared. Light from an upper window indicated that it was still inhabited.

I paused a moment, to reflect in what manner it became me to proceed. To ascertain the existence and condition of Wallace was the purpose of my journey. He had inhabited this house; and whether he remained in it, was now to be known. I felt repugnance to enter, since my safety might, by entering, be unawares and uselessly endangered. Most of the neighbouring houses were apparently deserted. In some there were various tokens of people being within. Might I not enquire at one of these respecting the condition of Thetford's family?—Yet why should I disturb them by enquiries so impertinent at this unreasonable hour? To knock at Thetford's door, and put my questions to him who should obey the signal, was the obvious method.

I knocked dubiously and lightly. No one came. I knocked again, and more
o 2 loudly;

loudly ; I likewise drew the bell—I distinctly heard its distant peals. If any were within, my signal could not fail to be noticed. I paused and listened ; but neither voice nor footsteps could be heard. The light, though obscured by window-curtains, which seemed to be drawn close, was still perceptible.

I ruminated on the causes that might hinder my summons from being obeyed. I figured to myself nothing but the helplessness of disease, or the insensibility of death.—These images only urged me to persist in endeavouring to obtain admission. Without weighing the consequences of my act, I involuntarily lifted the latch. The door yielded to my hand, and I put my feet within the passage.

Once more I paused. The passage was of considerable extent, and at the end of it I perceived light, as from a lamp or candle. This impelled me to go forward, till I reached the foot of a staircase. A candle stood upon the lowest step.

This

This was a new proof that the house was not deserted. I struck my heel against the floor with some violence ; but this, like my former signals, was unnoticed. Having proceeded thus far, it would have been absurd to retire with my purpose uneffected. Taking the candle in my hand, I opened a door that was near : it led into a spacious parlour, furnished with profusion and splendour. I walked to and fro, gazing at the objects which presented themselves ; and, involved in perplexity, I knocked with my heel louder than ever, but no less ineffectually.

Notwithstanding the lights which I had seen, it was possible that the house was uninhabited. This I was resolved to ascertain, by proceeding to the chamber which I had observed from without to be illuminated. This chamber, as far as the comparison of circumstances would permit me to decide, I believed to be the same in which I had passed the first night of my late abode in the city. Now was I, a second time, in almost equal

ignorance of my situation, and of the consequences which impended exploring my way to the same recess.

I mounted the stairs. As I approached the door of which I was in search, a vapour, infectious and deadly, assailed my senses. It resembled nothing of which I had ever before been sensible. Many odours had been met with, even since my arrival in the city, less supportable than this. I seemed not so much to smell, as to taste the element that now encompassed me. I felt as if I had inhaled a poisonous and subtile fluid, whose power instantly bereft my stomach of all vigour. Some fatal influence appeared to seize upon my vitals; and the work of corrosion and decomposition to be busily begun.

For a moment I doubted whether imagination had not some share in producing my sensation; but I had not been previously panic-struck: and even now I attended to my own sensations without mental discomposure. That I had imbibed this disease, was not to be questioned. So far the chances
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in my favour were annihilated. The lot of sickness was drawn.

Whether my case would be lenient or malignant—whether I should recover or perish, was to be left to the decision of the future. This incident, instead of appalling me, tended rather to invigorate my courage. The danger which I feared, had come. I might enter with indifference on this theatre of pestilence. I might execute, without faltering, the duties that my circumstances might create. My state was no longer hazardous; and my destiny would be totally uninfluenced by my future conduct.

The pang with which I was first seized, and the momentary inclination to vomit, which it produced, presently subsided. My wholesome feelings indeed did not revisit me, but strength to proceed was restored to me. The effluvia became more sensible as I approached the door of the chamber. The door was ajar, and the light within was perceived. My belief that those within were

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dead,

dead, was presently confuted by a sound, which I first supposed to be that of steps moving quickly and timorously across the floor. This ceased, and was succeeded by sounds of different, but inexplicable import.

Having entered the apartment, I saw a candle on the hearth. A table was covered with vials and other apparatus of a sick chamber. A bed stood on one side, the curtain of which was dropped at the foot, so as to conceal any one within. I fixed my eyes upon this object. There were sufficient tokens that some one lay upon the bed. Breath drawn at long intervals, mutterings scarcely audible, and a tremulous motion in the bedstead, were fearful and intelligible indications.

If my heart faltered, it must not be supposed that my trepidations arose from any selfish considerations. Wallace only, the object of my search, was present to my fancy. Pervaded with remembrance of the Hadwins—of the agonies which they had already endured.

endured—of the despair which would overwhelm the unhappy Susan, when the death of her lover should be ascertained—observant of the lonely condition of this house, whence I could only infer that the sick had been denied suitable attendance—and reminded by the symptoms that appeared, that this being was struggling with the agonies of death—a sickness of the heart, more insupportable than that which I had just experienced, stole upon me.

My fancy readily depicted the progress and completion of this tragedy. Wallace was the first of the family on whom the pestilence had seized. Thetford had fled from his habitation. Perhaps, as a father and a husband, to shun the danger attending his stay, was the injunction of his duty. It was, questionless, the conduct which selfish regards would dictate. Wallace was left to perish alone ; or, perhaps, which indeed was a supposition somewhat justified by appearances, he had been left to the attendance of

mercenary wretches, by whom, at this desperate moment, he had been abandoned.

I was not mindless of the possibility that these forebodings, specious as they were, might be false. The dying person might be some other than Wallace. The whispers of my hope were indeed faint; but they at least prompted me to snatch a look at the expiring man. For this purpose I advanced, and thrust my head within the curtain.

CHAP. XVII.

DEATH.

THE features of one whom I had seen so transiently as Wallace, may be imagined to be not easily recognised, especially when those features were tremulous and deathful. Here, however, the differences were too conspicuous to mislead me. I beheld one, to whom I could recollect none that bore resemblance. Though ghastly and livid, the traces of intelligence and beauty were undefaced. The life of Wallace was of more value to a feeble individual; but surely the being that was stretched before me, and

who was hastening to his last breath, was precious to thousands.

Was he not one in whose place I would willingly have died?—The offering was too late. His extremities were already cold. A vapour, noisome and contagious, hovered over him. The flutterings of his pulse had ceased. His existence was about to close amidst convulsions and pangs.

I withdrew my gaze from this object, and walked to a table. I was nearly unconscious of my movements. My thoughts were occupied with contemplations of the train of horrors and disasters that pursue the race of man. My musings were quickly interrupted by the sight of a small cabinet, the hinges of which were broken, and the lid half raised. In the present state of my thoughts, I was prone to suspect the worst. Here were traces of pillage. Some casual or mercenary attendant had not only contributed to hasten the death of the patient, but had rifled his property, and fled.

This

This suspicion would, perhaps, have yielded to mature reflections, if I had been suffered to reflect. A moment scarcely elapsed, when some appearance in the mirror which hung over the table, called my attention. It was a human figure. Nothing could be briefer than the glance that I fixed upon this apparition; yet there was room enough for the vague conception to suggest itself, that the dying man had started from his bed, and was approaching me. This belief was at the same instant confuted by the survey of his form and garb. One eye, a scar upon his cheek, a tawny skin, a form grotesquely misproportioned, brawny as Hercules, and habited in livery, composed as it were the parts of one view.

To perceive, to fear, and to confront this apparition were blended into one sentiment. I turned towards him with the swiftness of lightning, but my speed was useless to my safety. A blow upon my temple was succeeded by an utter oblivion of thought and
of

of feeling. I sunk upon the floor prostrate and senseless.

My insensibility might be mistaken by observers for death ; yet some part of this interval was haunted by a fearful dream. I conceived myself lying on the brink of a pit, whose bottom the eye could not reach. My hands and legs were fettered, so as to disable me from resisting two grim and gigantic figures, who stooped to lift me from the heart. Their purpose, methought, was to cast me into this abyss. My terrors were unspeakable ; and I struggled with such force, that my bonds snapped, and I found myself at liberty. At this moment my senses returned, and I opened my eyes.

The memory of recent events was, for a time, effaced by my visionary horrors. I was conscious of transition from one state of being to another ; but my imagination was still filled with images of danger. The bottomless gulf, and my gigantic persecutors, were still dreaded. I looked up with eagerness.

eagerness. Beside me I discovered three figures, whose character or office was explained by a coffin of pine-boards which lay upon the floor. One stood with a hammer and nails in his hand, as ready to replace and fasten the lid of the coffin, as soon as its burthen should be received.

I attempted to rise from the floor; but my head was dizzy, and my sight confused. Perceiving me revive, one of the men assisted me to regain my feet. The mist and confusion presently vanished, so as to allow me to stand unsupported, and to move. I once more gazed at my attendants, and recognised the three men whom I had met in High Street, and whose conversation I have mentioned that I overheard. I looked again upon the coffin. A wavering recollection of the incidents that led me hither, and of the stunning blow which I had received, occurred to me. I saw into what error appearances had misled these men, and shuddered to reflect by what hair-breadth means I had escaped being buried alive.

Before

Before the men had time to interrogate me, or to comment upon my situation, one entered the apartment, whose habit and mien tended to encourage me. The stranger was characterized by an aspect full of composure and benignity ; a face, in which the serious lines of age were blended with the ruddiness and smoothness of youth ; and a garb that bespoke that religious profession, with whose benevolent doctrines the example of Hadwin had rendered me familiar.

On observing me on my feet, he betrayed marks of surprise and satisfaction. He addressed me in a tone of mildness.

“ Young man,” said he, “ what is thy condition ?—Art thou sick ?—If thou art, thou must consent to receive the best treatment which the times will afford. These men will convey thee to the hospital at Bush Hill.”

The mention of that contagious and abhorred receptacle inspired me with some degree of energy.—“ No,” said I, “ I am not sick ;—a violent blow reduced me to
this

this situation. I shall presently recover strength enough to leave this spot without assistance."

He looked at me with an incredulous, but compassionate air.—"I fear thou dost deceive thyself, or me. The necessity of going to the hospital is much to be regretted, but on the whole it is best. Perhaps, indeed, thou hast kindred or friends who will take care of thee."

"No," said I, "neither kindred nor friends. I am a stranger in the city. I do not even know a single being."

"Alas!" returned the stranger, with a sigh, "thy state is sorrowful;—but how camest thou hither?" continued he, looking around him, "and whence comest thou?"

"I came from the country. I reached the city a few hours ago. I was in search of a friend who lived in this house."

"Thy undertaking was strangely hazardous and rash; but who is the friend thou seekest?—Was it he who died in that bed, and whose corpse has just been removed?"

The

The men now betrayed some impatience, and enquired of the last comer, whom they called Mr. Estwick, what they were to do. He turned to me, and asked if I were willing to be conducted to the hospital.

I assured him that I was free from disease, and stood in no need of assistance ; adding, that my feebleness was owing to a stunning blow received from a ruffian on my temple. The marks of this blow were conspicuous, and after some hesitation he dismissed the men ; who, lifting the empty coffin on their shoulders, disappeared.

He now invited me to descend into the parlour ; “ for,” said he, “ the air of this room is deadly. I feel already as if I should have reason to repent of having entered it.”

He now enquired into the cause of those appearances which he had witnessed. I explained my situation as clearly and succinctly as I was able.

After pondering in silence on my story—
“ I see how it is,” said he ; “ the person whom thou sawest in the agonies of death,

was

was a stranger. He was attended by his servant and a hired nurse. His master's death being certain, the nurse was dispatched by the servant to procure a coffin. He probably chose that opportunity to rifle his master's trunk that stood upon the table. Thy unseasonable entrance interrupted him; and he designed, by the blow which he gave thee, to secure his retreat before the arrival of a hearse. I know the man, and the apparition thou hast so well described, was his. Thou sayest that a friend of thine lived in this house. Thou hast come too late to be of service. The whole family have perished—not one was suffered to escape.”

This intelligence was fatal to my hopes. It required some efforts to subdue my rising emotions. Compassion not only for Wallace, but for Thetford, his father, his wife, and his child, caused a passionate effusion of tears. I was ashamed of this useless and childlike sensibility, and attempted to apologize to my companion. The sympathy, however, had proved contagious, and the
stranger

stranger turned away his face to hide his own tears.

“Nay,” said he, in answer to my excuses, “there is no need to be ashamed of thy emotion. Merely to have known this family, and to have witnessed their dep’orable fate, is sufficient to melt the most obdurate heart. I suspect that thou wast united to some one of this family by ties of tenderness like those which led the unfortunate Maravegli hither.”

This suggestion was attended, in relation to myself, with some degree of obscurity; but my curiosity was somewhat excited by the name that he had mentioned. I enquired into the character and situation of this person, and particularly respecting his connection with this family.

“Maravegli,” answered he, “was the lover of the eldest daughter, and already betrothed to her. The whole family, consisting of helpless females, had placed themselves under his peculiar guardianship.—

Mary

Mary Walpole and her children enjoyed in him a husband and a father."

The name of Walpole, to which I was a stranger, suggested doubts, which I hastened to communicate.—"I am in search," said I, "not of a female friend, though not devoid of interest in the welfare of Thetford and his family. My principal concern is for a youth, by name Wallace."

He looked at me with surprise.—"Thetford!—this is not his abode. He changed his habitation some weeks previous to the fever. Those who last dwelt under this roof were an English woman and seven daughters."

This detection of my error somewhat consoled me. It was still possible that Wallace was alive and in safety. I eagerly enquired whither Thetford had removed, and whether he had any knowledge of his present condition.

They had removed to No. —, in Market Street. Concerning their state he knew nothing. His acquaintance with
Thetford

Thetford was imperfect. Whether he had left the city, or had remained, he was wholly uninformed.

It became me to ascertain the truth in these respects. I was preparing to offer my parting thanks to the person by whom I had been so highly benefited; since, as he now informed me, it was by his interposition that I was hindered from being enclosed alive in a coffin. He was dubious of my true condition, and peremptorily commanded the followers of the hearse to desist. A delay of twenty minutes, and some medical application would, he believed, determine whether my life was extinguished or suspended. At the end of this time, happily, my senses were recovered.

Seeing my intention to depart, he enquired why and whither I was going?—Having heard my answer—"Thy design," resumed he, "is highly indiscreet and rash. Nothing will sooner generate this fever than fatigue and anxiety. Thou hast scarcely recovered from the blow so lately received.

Instead

Instead of being useful to others, this precipitation will only disable thyself.— Instead of roaming the streets, and inhaling this unwholesome air, thou hadst better betake thyself to bed, and try to obtain some sleep. In the morning thou wilt be better qualified to ascertain the fate of thy friend, and afford him the relief which he shall want.”

I could not but admit the reasonableness of these remonstrances; but where should a chamber and bed be sought?—It was not likely that a new attempt to procure accommodation at the inns would succeed better than the former.

“Thy state,” replied he, “is sorrowful. I have no house to which I can lead thee. I divide my chamber, and even my bed with another; and my landlady could not be prevailed upon to admit a stranger. What thou wilt do, I know not. This house has no one to defend it. It was purchased and furnished by the last possessor; but the whole family, including mistress, children, and servants

vants, was cut off in a single week. Perhaps no one in America can claim the property. Meanwhile plunderers are numerous and active. A house thus totally deserted, and replenished with valuable furniture, will, I fear, become their prey. To-night nothing can be done towards rendering it secure, but staying in it. Art thou willing to remain here till the morrow?

“ Every bed in the house has probably sustained a dead person. It would not be proper, therefore, to lie in any one of them. Perhaps thou mayst find some repose upon this carpet. It is, at least, better than the harder pavement, and the open air.”

This proposal, after some hesitation, I embraced. He was preparing to leave me, promising, if life were spared to him, to return early in the morning. My curiosity respecting the person whose dying agonies I had witnessed, prompted me to detain him a few minutes.

“ Ah !” said he, “ this, perhaps, is the only one of many victims to this pestilence, whose

whose loss the remotest generations may have reason to deplore. He was the only descendant of an illustrious house of Venice. He had been devoted from his childhood to the acquisition of knowledge and the practice of virtue. He came hither as an enlightened observer; and after traversing the country, conversing with all the men in it, eminent for their talents or their office, and collecting a fund of observations, whose solidity and justice have seldom been paralleled, he embarked, three months ago, for Europe.

“Previously to his departure, he formed a tender connection with the eldest daughter of this family. The mother and her children had recently arrived from England. So many faultless women, both mentally and personally considered, it was not my fortune to meet with before. This youth well deserved to be adopted into this family. He proposed to return with the utmost expedition to his native country, and after

the settlement of his affairs, to hasten back to America, and ratify his contract with Fanny Walpole.

“ The ship in which he embarked had scarcely got twenty leagues to sea, before she was disabled by a storm, and obliged to return to port. He posted to New York, to gain a passage in a packet shortly to sail. Meanwhile this malady prevailed among us. Mary Walpole was hindered, by her ignorance of the nature of that evil which assailed us, and the counsel of injudicious friends, from taking the due precautions for her safety. She hesitated to fly, till flight was rendered impracticable. Her death added to the helplessness and distraction of the family. They were successively seized and destroyed by the same pest.

“ Maravegli was apprized of their danger. He allowed the packet to depart without him, and hastened to the rescue of the Walpoles from the perils which encompassed them. He arrived in this city time enough

enough to witness the interment of the last survivor ! In the same hour he was seized himself by this disease :—the catastrophe is known to thee.

“ I will now leave thee to thy repose. Sleep is no less needful to myself than to thee ; for this is the second night which has passed without it.”—Saying this, my companion took his leave.

I now enjoyed leisure to review my situation—I experienced no inclination to sleep. I lay down for a moment ; but my comfortless sensations and restless contemplations would not permit me to rest. Before I entered this roof, I was tormented with hunger ; but my craving had given place to inquietude and loathing. I paced, in thoughtful and anxious mood, across the floor of the apartment.

I mused upon the incidents related by Estwick—upon the exterminating nature of this pestilence—and upon the horrors of which it was productive. I compared

the experience of the last hours, with those pictures which my imagination had drawn in the retirements of Malverton. I wondered at the contrariety that exists between the scenes of the city and the country ; and fostered with more zeal than ever the resolution to avoid those seats of depravity and danger.

Concerning my own destiny, however, I entertained no doubt. My new sensations assured me that my stomach had received this corrosive poison. Whether I should die or live, was easily decided. The sickness, which assiduous attendance and powerful prescriptions might remove, would, by negligence and solitude, be rendered fatal. But from whom could I expect medical or friendly treatment ?

I had indeed a roof over my head. I should not perish in the public way ; but what was my ground for hoping to continue under this roof ? My sickness being suspected, I should be dragged in a cart to
the

the hospital, where I should indeed die; but not with the consolation of loneliness and silence. Dying groans were the only music, and livid corpses were the only spectacle to which I should there be introduced.

Immured in these dreary meditations, the night passed away. The light glancing through the window, awakened in my bosom a gleam of cheerfulness. Contrary to my expectations, my feelings were not more distempered, notwithstanding my want of sleep, than on the last evening. This was a token that my state was far from being so desperate as I suspected. It was possible, I thought, that this was the worst indisposition to which I was liable.

Meanwhile the coming of Estwick was impatiently expected. The sun arose, and the morning advanced, but he came not. I remembered that he talked of having reason to repent his visit to this house. Perhaps he likewise was sick, and that this was the

the cause of his delay. This man's kindness had even my love. If I had known the way to his dwelling, I should have hastened thither to inquire into his condition, and to perform for him every office that humanity might enjoin ; but he had not afforded me any information on that head.

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